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ABSTRACT

The Cup'ik people are a group of Yup'ik Eskimos who live in southwest Alaska. This curriculum aims to enhance Cup'ik students' interest in their own culture by making that culture a part of their daily activities; to teach students to practice the traditional Cup'ik respect for elders, fellow students, and others in the community; and to teach traditional skills for surviving in the Alaskan tundra. An introduction briefly discusses the Cup'ik way of life, traditional rules of cooperation, and the importance of field trips to traditional Cup'ik sites. Such trips allow students to appreciate and understand their cultural way of life and internalize the stories told by the elders. There are three lessons: the land and waters, the history of the Cup'ik people, and the Cup'ik way of life (traditional hunting and fishing practices and the subsistence lifestyle). The history lesson compares the Cup'ik traditional history with modern anthropological theories of Cup'ik history and describes seasonal celebrations and festivals. Each lesson contains a lesson outline, general objectives, related activities, and a general description of the outlined items. Underlined words in the paper text indicate where links to additional information are in the Internet version. Also, in the Internet version, one can hear the pronunciation of the underlined words in the glossary by clicking on them. (TD)

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The Cup'ik People of the Western Tundra:

ED 448 943

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A curriculum

By

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This curriculum is part of the **Native Studies Curriculum and Teacher Development Project**

The Native Studies Curriculum and Teacher Development project is a joint project of the Institute of Social and Economic Research at the University of Alaska Anchorage, the Kashunamiut School District, and (others?). It has three purposes: (1) to develop model curricula in Alaska Native studies and languages; (2) to develop a model process for curriculum development that can be replicated in predominantly Native schools throughout Alaska; and (3) to develop a model of professional education for both practicing and preservice teachers, centered on curriculum development in Alaska Native studies and languages.

Author's Introduction and Background for the Curriculum

RC 022094

Author's Introduction

The Cup'ik people have lived on Alaska's western tundra from time immemorial. "The Cup'ik People of the Western Tundra" is a curriculum guide for teachers, providing lessons on the culture, history, and lifestyle of the Cup'ik people of the region around Chevak, in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Remember that *you,* as a teacher of the lessons contained in this curriculum guide, are also an important resource.

I am Cup'ik and a teacher as well. The Cup'ik people have been exposed to Western culture for roughly 150 years. Our children sit in classrooms and learn mainly about Western history and culture. There is a need to reform our schools to include teaching our children the histories and stories of their ancestors. The Native Curriculum and Teacher Development Project is intended to help bring Native culture and history into schools throughout Alaska.

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My home village of Chevak is in the midst of the region occupied by the Central Alaskan Yup'ik Eskimo. The Cup'ik people are Yup'ik Eskimos, but they have their own dialect and are a historically distinct group. The Yup'ik people live throughout southwest Alaska, in 54 villages along the Lower Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers and delta. The Cup'ik people of Chevak are the Qissunamiut tribe, whose main historic village was on the Kashunak River. (There is one other Cup'ik tribe—the Cup'ik people of Mekroyuk on Nunivak Island.) The Qissunamiut Cup'ik dialect differs from the more widespread Yup'ik dialects, but it is understood throughout the Yup'ik region.

I appreciate this opportunity to publish and share my insights about my culture and all the things I've learned over many years of working with two Cup'ik Elders—my grandfather, Joe Friday, who was a well-known storyteller and traditional cultural bearer, and his partner, Ulric Nayamin, who was a leader and a philosopher. Joe Friday and Ulric Nayamin were iluraq—or close relatives, like first cousins. Years ago, these two Elders shared their knowledge with Cup'ik students in Chevak. They prepared by spending quiet time, undisturbed by others, talking over concepts and subjects. They never wrote anything down. Talking together also helped them explore their concerns about Cup'ik young people. When the students misbehaved, the two Elders would correct them by making it clear that such behavior was not acceptable under Cup'ik standards.

Although this is mainly a curriculum guide for teachers, the project team is happy to make it available on the Internet, for background reading and information for students and others. We also hope that Native people and teachers throughout Alaska can use this curriculum as a model, to help them develop ways of teaching about their own regions.

Many thanks to those who helped me develop this curriculum, especially Paula Atcherian, Rebecca Nayamin-Kelly, Sam Ulruan, and Suzanne Sharp and other staff of the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER). I also thank Bill McDiarmid, ISER's director, for his support of and interest in the project.

Joseph Friday

Background for the Curriculum

My Window to the Past

The oldest story of our Cup'ik ancestry is recorded in "Our First Ancestor," by my grandfather and mentor, Joe Friday. When my grandfather began telling me stories of our ancestry, it was difficult for me to understand the Cup'ik philosophy embedded in those stories, because it involved a complex way of thinking. This mental block prevented me from understanding our ancestral way of life through my grandfather's eyes. My mental block can be described as not having experienced what my grandfather did, before extensive contact with Western civilization. The "window to the past" was a complicated intellectual skill I had to develop. To accurately record the stories on paper, I had to visualize them.

Joe Friday's helper and partner, Ulric Nayamin, also helped me understand the past. He would explain, in modern context, elements that helped me fully understand the stories. He was also my window to the past. Many of the stories and legends he and my grandfather told took place near Chevak, at sites I began to know and see through the experience and eyes of my forefathers.

Cuuyaraq: Our Way of Life as Human Beings

To learn about Cup'ik culture and history, our young people must first become familiar with *Cuuyaraq*, or our way of life as human beings. *Cuuyaraq* highlights our dealings with fellow members of the community, our subsistence way of life, our relationship to our environment, and our understanding of the spirit world and Creator. If our young people are well taught in *Cuuyaraq*, they can become masters of the land and live good prosperous lives.

To become knowledgeable in *Cuuyaraq* one must be open to advice and listen to Elders and parents. There are different methods of acquiring the wisdom and knowledge of our ancestors. Many of the Elders who share knowledge will say, "These are not my words." Some Elders hesitate to speak about different elements of life, because they are afraid of making mistakes or giving wrong information. Others will consult and correct each other when they give advice. Occasionally, one or two Elders will have confidence in their advice and will be direct in correcting the wrongdoings of others.

Elders will remind us, "If we didn't care, we would have not said anything to you." The person who does not say anything about your wrongdoing does not show care and love toward you. The person who says something—even if your mind and heart may be offended—is the person who loves you and does not want you to repeat the mistakes he may have made.

This is the reason why *Cuuyaraq* is so sacred to our people. As they grow older, many people say, "I have begun to recognize the experience that my Elders have talked about for so long." Young people given advice may at first say, "No way in this world will I ever do that." But as time passes they say, "We recognize those things we have been told about our future." It is true that our ancestor's words are real and can be used each and every day. This belief in our heritage also needs to be passed on to our young people. We are the only ones able to pass on the information that will allow our *Cuuyaraq* to survive.

Amellrutaq: Rule of Cooperation

Another very important aspect of the traditional Cup'ik way of life is *amellrutaq* , or rule of cooperation. To understand our culture, young people must also understand how decisions were traditionally made.

The Cup'ik people would talk and reach a consensus about some issue affecting the community. Once a consensus was reached, no one could go against it. The rule of cooperation states that whatever the majority wants, never go against it. This is referred to as *pairtesqevkenaku*: do not go against it. It was dangerous to go against the group; the well-being of one person could be destroyed, if the rest of the people developed negative attitudes toward him.

Once the consensus of the people was reached, it was told to an Elder in the village, who could then advise the people. Since the Elder had experienced more in life, he could advise others about whether the decision they had reached was good or bad for them. The Elder was an important element in the process of reaching a decision and determining whether it was a good decision.

This traditional practice corresponds with what we still do today. In community meetings, people state their

views and after all their views are expressed, a decision is then voted on. If one person is against the consensus decision, he should not speak against the people's choice. Others may turn against him, and the life of that person will be unpleasant.

The rule of the Cup'ik people states:

> *Never Go Against the Consensus of The People. Always Work Together Once a Decision Has Been Made.*

"HONORING WHAT WE KNOW, LISTEN TO WHAT WE SAY."

WHAT IS THE TALKING CIRCLE? THE TALKING CIRCLE DOES THE FOLLOWING:

*METHOD USED TO COMMUNICATE TO ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE GROUP NEUTRALIZING CONFLICTS WITHIN

*AMELLRUTAQ- TRADITIONAL WAY OF DECISION MAKING

*DEVELOPMENT OF BOND BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS

*LEARNING ACTIVITY FOR SPECIFIC TOPICS

*RESEARCH METHOD FOR CERTAIN TOPICS EACH CLASS IS INTERESTED IN

*HEALING AND EXPRESSING TRAUMA OF OUR ANCESTORS

*LEARNING ABOUT THE HISTORIC EVENTS

*SHARING ONE'S EMOTION TO OTHERS

*COMMUNICATING FROM THE HEART

*LEARNING ABOUT OUR CHILDERN'S VALUES

*ENCOMPASSING SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS

*A WAY TO TEACH SELF-ESTEEM

*DEVELOPING NEW IDEAS

SETTING THE RULES

*SELECT A MODERATOR TO STAY FOCUSED ON THE SUBJECT; THE MODERATOR WILL MAKE SURE THAT EVERYONE IS DISCUSSING ON ONE SUBJECT ONLY.

*LEARN TO TRUST ONE ANOTHER- EVERYONE MUST MAKE A COMMITMENT NOT TO REPEAT WHAT HAS BEEN SAID BY EACH INDIVIDUAL IF PERSONAL FEELINGS OR EMOTIONS ARE EXPRESSED UNEXPECTEDLY, OTHERWISE, THERE IS NO NEED IF IT IS ALL EDUCATIONAL.

*AN OBJECT, SUCH AS A FEATHER OR STICK, CAN BE THE IDENTIFIER OF THE

SPEAKER. THE SPEAKER MUST BE RECOGNIZED, RESPECTED, AND LISTENED TO, BY EVERYONE.

*EVERYONE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT THE TALKING CIRCLE IS NOT FOR DEBATE OR ANGER; IT MUST NEVER BE DISPLAYED TO ANY OF THE MEMBERS.

*EVERYONE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT THE TALKING CIRCLE IS THE SOLUTION FOR ALL PROBLEMS. WE TALK ABOUT THEM AND PROVIDE SOLUTONS TO THEM.
*THERE ARE NO BYSTANDERS IN THIS ACTIVITY. EVERYONE IS INCLUDED IN THE CIRCLE.

*AT THE END OF EACH TALKING CIRCLE, PURIFICATION CAN BE PROVIDED, IF THE NEED IS THERE.

Predictions of the Wise Men

Long before white men arrived in southwest Alaska, Cup'ik wise men predicted how our lives would change in the future. They told stories to the younger generation, predicting the following things: (1) that people would behave without respect; (2) that there would be a smoking star; and (3) that shining particles would appear on the tundra.

Disrespectful Behavior

The wise men predicted that people's behavior would deteriorate, and that unacceptable behavior would be displayed openly, without remorse. This kind of behavior was not tolerated traditionally, and was considered a disgrace to families who did not try to correct it. Some examples of such behavior include lack of respect for people who try to correct bad behavior, swearing and fighting. Such behavior among young people is a result of little or no discipline. An important result of bad behavior is that people who choose to behave with disrespect do not learn traditional knowledge and wisdom—and may therefore not survive the harsh conditions in the Arctic.

Much of what the wise men predicted came to pass, in the third or fourth generation after white men arrived in the region. The missionaries came; more white men came; white men's goods began coming to Qissunaq. Soon the Eskimo way of living was disappearing. No more *Qaygiqs*; no more hunting with bows and arrows; no more Eskimo clothes. The traditional beliefs were suppressed. Too often, young people lost discipline and began behaving however they pleased.

The Smoking Star

The wise men also predicted that a smoking star would appear near Cape Romanzof. We believe this prediction meant that the coming generations would use machines that smoke, and things that smoke—like cigarettes and gasoline burners.

Shining Trash on the Tundra

Finally, the wise men foresaw shining trash on the tundra. They said that in the future we'd be seeing particles shining from the sun on the tundra. We believe these shiny particles they predicted were items made of glass, aluminum, and other metals that have become so prevalent in our lives.

These predictions were made long before there was any influence with other cultures. They have been passed down in stories over the generations. It is startling to think about how much of what our ancestors foresaw can be seen in our lives today. But it is vital for our young people to learn what life was like among the Cup'ik people for thousands of years before outsiders came.

Framework for Learning: The Classroom and Beyond

This curriculum is intended to enhance the students' interest in their own culture by making that culture a part of their daily activities. Another key element of the lessons is teaching students to practice the traditional Cup'ik respect for fellow students and for others in the community.

The stories and legends of our people—who we are and where we came from—are very important for our children to learn. The Qissunamiut Cup'ik people of Chevak traditionally used semi-subterranean sod houses as training sites for young people. The Elders taught simple rules and guidelines that students learned with intensity. Their goal was to prepare students to survive in the face of any future natural or man-made disasters. They prepared the students by teaching them the ancestral ways of living, before contact with Western culture.

Today most teaching is confined to classrooms. But teaching Cup'ik children the traditional stories and legends in just classrooms is difficult—because to really learn, the students must picture and internalize the stories. So while this curriculum is mainly intended to help teachers in the classroom, it also calls for students to leave the classroom and go to some traditional Cup'ik sites. Students will spend a few days living and sleeping on the tundra—during fall, winter, and summer—at sites where stories told by the Elders took place. The students will bring their sleeping gear and other camping essentials. For students to fully appreci[illegible]nd understand their cultural way of life—and to picture and internalize the Cup'ik stories and legends—they must experience for themselves how our ancestors lived 100 or more years ago.

Another reason for students to spend time subsisting on the land is to help them appreciate what they eat and learn to identify food sources available for each village. The survival methods of our ancestors will come into play. Some of those methods, as described later in the curriculum, can be demonstrated. Students will experience both the hardship and the enjoyment of the tundra by reliving the paths of their ancestors. The Cup'ik stories and legends will then become real to them.

Yet another goal of this curriculum is (like the goal of the Elders in earlier years) preparing our young people for natural or man-made disasters that could devastate our towns and villages. For example, disasters such as volcanic eruptions could prevent oil and gas from reaching our villages. How could we survive without fuel for our modern-day conveniences? What would happen if supplies could no longer be flown or shipped to our villages?

Our ancestral ways of living would help us survive these difficulties, should they happen—but we must teach our children those traditional ways. This includes teaching them about traditional clothing and tools that can help us become independent of our modern conveniences.

In summary, this curriculum will teach students about their culture so that the traditional way of life will not be foreign to them. Our region is treeless—but it is still beautiful: the beautiful tundra that is home to the Cup'ik people.

Glossary

Lesson I: The Land and Waters

Outline for Lesson I

General Objectives and Activities Related to Lesson I

Introduction to Lesson I

General Description

Land Features

- Maraq (Lowlands)
- Nunapik (Highlands)
- Mountains

Vegetation

- Edible Plants
- Medicinal Plants
- Uses of Grass

Lakes

- Saltwater Lakes
- Freshwater Lakes

Rivers and Sloughs

Traditional Man-Made Rivers

Bering Sea

General Objectives of Lesson I

Students will learn to locate Chevak, the Yukon and Kuskokwim deltas, and the state of Alaska on maps.

Students will learn to identify and describe:

Land features

Edible and other useful plants around Chevak

Lakes and the kinds of fish that spawn in saltwater and freshwater lakes

Habitats of waterfowl

Rivers (including traditional man-made rivers) around Chevak

The Bering Sea and its relationship to the people of Chevak

Health and Safety Issues:

Safety rules and conditions to keep dry

Safety rules for boating

Right conduct and disciplinary action for wrong behavior

General first aid instruction

How to operate campstoves and flammable liquids

Safety rules regarding firearms, other tools like axes

Appropriate clothing to bring

Proper waste disposal and personal hygience while camping

Importance of being drug and alcohol free

Activities Related to Lesson I

Draw a map around Chevak and identify Cup'ik place names for rivers and lakes.

Discuss how to avoid getting hypothermia, how to walk without sweating.

Discuss appropriate gear, and clothing to bring for Sea-Week.

Discuss firearm safety while hunting for seal and birds.

Interpret weather conditions as taught by Elders.

Discuss disciplinary action to be taken when one becomes a danger to others by fighting, bothering others, not heeding advice from Elders.

Discuss how to prepare for emergency situations and first aid help.

Discuss proper techniques for use of campstoves, other flammable liquids, and how to use tools such as axes.

Discuss proper boating safety and importance of life jackets.

Discuss importance of cleanliness and keeping environment free of litter.

Camp out as an organized environmental study in remote places as a Sea-Week

activity.

Go on field trips to gather plant specimens from river and lakes.

Identify different types of fish caught in the rivers or lakes.

Make manaqs and fish traps to catch fish.

Go on a field trip and locate where edible plants.

Go on a field trip to locate where poisonous plants grow.

Go on a field trip to gather plants and identify them with Cup'ik and scientific names.

Go on a field trip to manaq and fish in rivers and identify and dissect fish that are eaten.

Go on a field trip to gather seashells and beach objects.

Study and identify the historical and cemetery sites of this region and how they are related to the history of the people.

Gather information for this region from Elders and existing documents.

Go on a field trip to gather medicinal plants from the tundra.

Lesson I: The Land and Waters

Introduction

This lesson describes the major geographical features of our region and explains how the land and its resources sustain the Cup'ik people. It is crucial for users of this curriculum to understand the importance of the land to its inhabitants. For those not familiar with our country, this lesson explains why the Cup'ik people have chosen to live on Alaska's western tundra.

General Description

The village of Chevak and the surrounding lands are in western Alaska, between the Yukon and Kuskokwim river deltas. It is 20 air miles from the Bering Sea and 130 air miles west of Bethel, the hub of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. About 750 people, mostly Cup'ik, live in Chevak. Chevak is in the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, which Congress set aside mainly to protect the waterfowl that nest in the region every year.

The land around Chevak is vast tundra and looks flat to people traveling by boat or snowmachine. From the air, travelers can see thousands of lakes. During winter, the tundra is still, like a sleeping giant, and in spring it comes to life with millions of nesting birds that migrate here from other parts of the country. When the sun comes up in the morning, the land is cast with many emerging colors. At twilight, colors illuminate the rolling hills and the clouds high in the atmosphere.

During winter, from October to March, ice and snow cover the country, allowing people to travel by snowmachine. All the lakes, rivers, and parts of the Bering Sea freeze during this time. Between March a May spring arrives. With the snow and ice melting, the tundra comes to life once again. There are rapid water run-offs from the low tundra lands. When the weather becomes extremely warm, the snow melts rapidly and forms deep pools of water on the tundra. These pools then will run off to the sloughs and rivers. The water flows into the ice cracks on the still-frozen rivers. Travelers must be wary of these dangerous conditions, which create large holes on the ice of the lakes and rivers.

Land Features

Although the land in the vicinity of Chevak is flat, further away (between 5 and 60 miles away) are mountains. There are two types of land features in the delta: lowlands, or *maraq* in Cup'ik; and highlands, which the Cup'ik people call *nunapik*.

Both the high and lowland areas provide abundant habitat for the many species of migrating birds that nes and raise their young in these areas. For example, white-fronted geese can be found in the highland area, while cackling geese and black brant are often present in the lowland area. Swans also feed in the lowland lakes. Cranes are common in both low and highlands.

Maraq (Lowlands)

Maraq, or lowlands, have the following characteristics: 1) grassy, marshy wetlands; 2) saltwater lakes; 3) coastal flooding; and 4) waterfowl and small species of birds nesting and raising their young in spring and summer.

Nunapik (Highlands)

Nunapik is found in the interior terrain. This is where rivers become fresh water, and salt water is not usually present. Several characteristics identify *nunapik*: 1) freshwater lakes; 2) abundant berries; 3) no coastal flooding; and 4) driftwood that washes to the edges of *nunapik* as a result of coastal flooding.

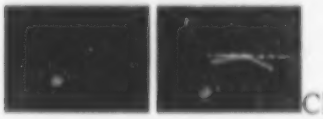
Another important feature of *nunapik* is sod, which the Cup'ik people use for making sod houses. Sod (which is formed of the tangled roots of tundra plants and grasses) is very strong and is capable of keeping the rain out, if each piece of sod is overlapped on the outside of the house. (Sod house construction is described in Lesson III.) Sod also has many other uses. For instance, it can be used for building emergency shelters on the tundra. Blocks of sod are put in a circle and piled as high as possible; then a roof is made out of driftwood and covered with sliced sod. Also, traditional smokehouses are made of sod and driftwood.

Mountains

Besides the highland and the lowland areas, the other landforms in the region are mountains, which are generally less than 2,000 feet high. Anything bigger then 2,000 would be a massive mountain for us. Most of the mountains have highland vegetation and are often outlined with alder trees and willows; some are

rocky.

The Askinuk Mountains are to the north of Chevak. About 30 miles northeast of Chevak, and between Chevak and the Yukon River, are the Kusilvak (or Manelgnok) Mountains. To the east of Chevak are Ingrissaaraq Mountain, Nasqulek Mountain, Ingricukvak Mountain, and Ingrillrat Mountain. Southeast of Chevak, the Nelson Island Mountains appear miniature, with a blue outline. Our ancestors called these mountains Qaluyaat, and they are probably the richest of the mountains around Chevak. The Qaluyaat Mountains provide our people with colored clay. Long ago the Cup'ik people began using this clay to color the masks they carved, and we continue to use it today. The clay is colored red, blue, and white.

 Click on picture to enlarge

Vegetation

The tundra is treeless, but it has many other kinds of vegetation. In the spring, flowers of many colors display the beauty of the tundra. The lowland (*maraq*) vegetation consists of mostly of grassy, marshy, and wet lands. This lowland is covered during fall floods caused by high winds and high tides. Berry plants are common in *nunapik* (highlands), and labrador tea plants are also abundant. Other vegetation in *nunapik* includes wood-stemmed plants, moss, and lichens.

The Cup'ik people use plants for food, for medicine, for baskets and mats, for insulation, and for much more. Below is a general description of the kinds of vegetation on the western tundra and the plants we use most. It isn't intended as a comprehensive description. A good source of information on the plant life in this area is *Wild Edible and Poisonous Plants of Alaska*, published by the Cooperative Extension Service at the University of Alaska.

Edible Plants

The many kinds of berries that grow in the region are important edible plants. Our people pick mainly salmon berries (also called cloudberries), black berries (also called crowberries), bog cranberries, and red berries (lowbush cranberries) for winter use as *akutaq*, or Eskimo ice cream. Other edible plants consist of pallas-buttercups, sourdocks, and other greens found along the banks of the rivers and sloughs. The only poisonous plant in our region is the water hemlock, which can be found on the banks of freshwater lakes. (Water hemlock is also known as poison water hemlock or muskrat food; children in the Yukon-Kuskowim Delta have died after eating the roots of this plant.)

Medicinal Plants

The Cup'ik people are expert in using some of the plants in the region for medicinal purposes; they can use plants the way doctors do medicine. For example, tea made from the leaves of *caiggluk*, or wormwood, is used for to fight sore throats, stomach discomforts, and other ailments; poultices are also made from boiled leaves. *Caglak*, or rosewort, is used to help heal sores.

Uses of Grass

Grasses in the region have many uses. One plant that has monetary value is the type of blade grass found along the beaches of the Bering Sea. The women of our region pick this grass during fall and make exotic baskets with it. Our region is well known for these beautiful baskets, which are marketed all over the world.

Another grass—a tall, coarse grass—that grows abundantly along marshy land surrounding freshwater lakes in highland areas is called *kelugaq*. Muskrats eat the roots of this plant. It is a strong grass that Cup'ik people pick when it is green and then dry it until it becomes pale and dead. The women then braid it into beautiful mats for *qayaqs*.

The tall grass found in the highland land areas is used for insulating sod houses, as well as for boot insoles and bedding for camping outdoors. It can also be used in emergencies. Placing it between the skin and wet clothing prevents severe frostbite.

Another grass, the blade-grass that grows along the lakes, is the diet of geese and goslings. Mice also eat grass roots. During fall freezeup, mice gather two kinds of grass roots on the lowlands and store them in small burrows. The tall grass root is called *utngungssaaq* and the small grass root is called *marallaq*. The people of this region, in turn, gather these grass roots to add to soup. In the highlands, mice gather a root called *iitaq*.

Lakes

By air, travelers can see thousands of lakes dotting the landscape of this region. In the lowland areas the saltwater lakes dominate, while in highland areas freshwater lakes are abundant. The large lakes (both saltwater and freshwater) where various species of fish spawn are called *qagatet*.

Saltwater Lakes

Microscopic bugs live in these saltwater lakes, so it is important to boil this lake water before drinking it. Clear saltwater can also be used for cooking. Species of fish that spawn in saltwater lakes include *cukilek* (needlefish), *naptaq* (whitefish), *naternaq*(flounders), and *kayurrlugaq* (bullfish or devilfish).

Freshwater Lakes

The freshwater from these lakes is excellent for making tea or for cooking. During the fall, swans and ducks feed in certain freshwater lakes and rivers. Flocks of swans can easily be seen by their contrasting white color. In the evenings, the trumpet sounds of the swans reveal which lakes and freshwater rivers are being invaded. Big flocks of swans feed from one lake to another, searching for *tayaruqs*—tiny hair-like plants. Swans and ducks feed off the roots of these plants, which must be highly nutritious—because large flocks of birds concentrate in lakes and rivers with *tayaruqs*. The birds become fat before migrating to southern countries.

The fish that spawn in freshwater lakes include *naptaq* (small whitefish), *citegtaq* (tomcods), *can'giiq* (blackfish), *manignaq* (lushfish), *cukvak* (pikefish), and *cukilek* (needlefish or stickleback).

Some fish spawn in both freshwater and saltwater lakes; these include whitefish, tomcods, flounders, and devilfish.

Tidal Rivers and Sloughs

Tidal rivers and sloughs run out to the Bering Sea. Most of these rivers and sloughs are silty and muddy. The rivers and sloughs near the seacoast have muddy bottoms, unlike the freshwater rivers of the interior, which have weeds growing in them. Rivers and sloughs around Chevak are interconnected through tributaries that branch out and then come together.

Traditional Man-made Rivers

For many centuries, the Cup'ik people have made rivers and sloughs as shortcuts (*cevellret*) for boat travel. We make shortcuts by digging a small line between tributaries and thereby connecting two rivers at places where large bends occur. Then the river currents take over, moving water back and forth until small sloughs develop. Over time, the rushing water removes the silt and mud at the bottom until the sloughs develop into rivers. The high concentration of rushing waters during spring thaw helps develop these man-made sloughs into deep channels.

The people of Chevak are well known for making such new rivers to shorten the distance for boat travel. For example, if traversing a bend would take fifteen to thirty minutes, shortcuts can reduce that time to a few seconds. Chevak people have made about five such shortcuts to this day.

In fact, the old Chevak and the present Chevak were named for *cev'aq*, meaning "the one that has broken through." This refers to rivers that have become connected by the erosion of riverbanks, or lakes that have disappeared and broken through to the ocean. The rivers in this region are constantly changing, and because of this natural process many of the rivers we once knew are gone.

Some of the traditional sites of the Cup'ik people are now underwater or in the middle of rivers, because of riverbanks constantly eroding to one side. This process has also eliminated some of the spawning lakes along the Bering Sea coast; the Cup'ik expression for that is "being blown away to the ocean" or *qagerluteng*. Many Cup'ik Elders remember being in these lakes with their qayaq at in the 1950s and 1960s.

The Bering Sea

The Bering Sea is the most respected resource of the Cup'ik people. When we go out subsistence hunting in the Bering Sea, our Elders advise us to never challenge the ocean, but to respect it. The beauty of the ocean is reflected when it is calm—and that is one reason why the Cup'ik people will return to the ocean again and again, even though they have encountered hard situations or conditions in the past.

In the Bering Sea, the ice develops during the cold winter months, creating both the lead ice from the shore and the loose pack ice that moves back and forth during low and high tides. When the weather is extremely cold, thin ice can develop, covering all the open water. The seal hunters look for open water in the mouths of large rivers. The ice pack opens during low tide.

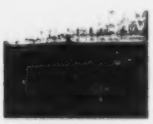
It is during the spring season that we concentrate on hunting seals in the Bering Sea. Seal hunting is favorable during March, April, and May, when the weather is usually nice and calm. That contrasts with weather during the fall, when it is typically frigid cold and windy. If hunters know the weather is favorable and the winds are moderate, they will go out to sea, but if gusty winds come up they will head for the safety

of shore.

It is important for hunters to learn the river system as one large geographic area—that is, they need to learn all the rivers, their tributaries, and the links between them. In some cases boat routes from one river to the other include tundra lakes. When hunters learn to recognize all the regional landmarks, they have a better chance of surviving. If the weather turns bad, or other situations arise that make it impossible to return home by one route, knowledgeable hunters can find another route. For example, changing ice conditions might mean hunters have to move to a different area to reach shore ice. Some hunters have survived because they were able to find their way to different areas when necessary.

The Cup'ik people use the seal for both clothing and food. The most critical part of the seal is its blubber, which we render and use in our daily diet. We cut the blubber into long strips, then cut the strips almost through crosswise. Then we put these strips in a container and store them in a cool place. The oil slowly renders out of the fat. The resulting oil is very high in vitamins A and D, and we use it in many ways. It adds flavor to soups and stews. We dip dried fish and meat, raw frozen fish, and vegetables in it. It is sometimes used in *akutaq* (Eskimo ice cream) as well.

Chevak people and those living in coastal villages along the Bering Sea both learn the same hunting and survival methods. There are rules our Elders teach us so we can survive the dangers of the Bering Sea. One of the most important pieces of advice is never to panic when encountering dangerous conditions on the ocean. Lesson III of this curriculum lists all the rules we are taught and describes traditional and current seal hunting methods.

 Click on pictures to enlarge

Glossary

Lesson II: History of the Cup'ik People

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General Objectives for Students

The students will be able to locate on map where the Cup'ik people live.

The students will be able to explain the Anthropological theory of origination.

The students will be able to explain the Cup'ik people's interpretation of origination.

The students will recall landmarks in Civuliaqatuk's story and why they are important.

The students will define Cup'ik and how it is related to the Yup'ik people around Chevak.

The students will be able to describe the epidemics and the historical importance to Cup'ik people.

The students will be able to compose in their own words "How Chevak came to be."

Activities for Students

The students will discuss all theories of where Cup'ik people came from.

Students will illustrate pictures related to "My First Ancestor."

The students will illustrate pictures related to "Civuliaqatuk's story.

The students will write their own interpretations of where they came from.

The students will make a video of the story of "My First Ancestor" as a play.

The students will videotape interviews of Elders as research on where they came from.

Students will go on a fieldtrip to old sites and draw diagrams where each family lived.

Students will identify water sources and types of food people subsist from the land.

Students will bring Elders to Kash project sites and record stories of the past.

Students will invite Elders into classrooms and record their stories of the past.

Students will make a map of historical use and cemetery sites.

Students will invite anthropologists who participated in site excavations into the classroom to help students understand and appreciate the history of the old sites.

The students will dramatize a real life situation that occurred in the Old Kashunak move of the old village after the great flood of 1948 with amellrutaq or the talking circle.

Students will write a script about the history and dramatize this event for parents and Elders.

Lesson II: History of the Cup'ik People

Introduction

This lesson is intended to give students an overview of the history of the Cup'ik people. It is not intended to be comprehensive. Instead, I hope it will help students understand the critical role of traditional stories in Cup'ik history. These stories are history: they portray how our ancestors actually lived and important events in their lives. The genius of these stories is that they are able to reconcile and make sense out of what may at first seem to be conflicting Western and Cup'ik beliefs. Another important part of our history is reflected in the traditional festivals the Cup'ik people celebrated for hundreds of years before Western missionaries arrived in the region. Those festivals marked the change of seasons and other major events in the traditional Cup'ik life; the objects and rituals in those festivals reveal a lot about what was important in daily life.

Cup'ik and English Names

The Cup'ik people are Yup'ik Eskimos, but they have their own dialect and are a historically distinct group. The terms Cup'ik and Yup'ik have the same meaning ("the real people"), but different dialect pronunciations.

Today there are two Cup'ik tribes in Alaska—the people of Chevak, who refer to themselves as the Qissunamiut tribe, and the people of Mekoryuk on Nunivak Island, who refer to themselves as the Cup'ik people. The pronunciations of "Cup'ik" and other words vary somewhat in the two villages. Yup'ik people inhabit villages as close as Hooper Bay, twenty miles west of Chevak, and Scammon Bay, which is thirty miles north of Chevak. Overall, the Yup'ik people live from Elim on the Seward Peninsula to Egegik on the Alaska Peninsula.

The Cup'iks traditionally lived in the vicinity of the Kashunak River, a tributary of the Yukon River. The U.S. government census takers who came to this region in the late 1800s reported finding a village called "Kashunak" at the mouth of the Kashunak River. This was an English version of Qissunaq—the Cup'ik name for the river. Missionaries and traders called the Cup'ik people Kashunamiut, an English version of Qissunamiut—meaning, "the people of Qissunaq."

The documentation of these terms can be found in Edward Nelson's book, *The Eskimos of the Bering Sea*. The people of the region called Nelson "a man who buys good-for-nothing things." The items Nelson purchased from the people of this region were not valued at that time. These included everything from old stone tools to carvings to clothing. However, today these items are highly valued. Nelson recorded many important historical sites of the Cup'ik people, as well as events such as feasts.

Origins of the Cup'ik People

The Anthropologists' View

Anthropologists have at least two theories about how the Cup'ik people came to Alaska. One theory is that the Cup'ik people migrated from Asia long ago, following the animals as they crossed the Bering Land Bridge during the great Ice Age. Another theory is that they followed the coast, hunting sea mammals and fishing, skipping around the ice-covered areas. (More information about these theories and about archeological findings in the region can be found in *Handbook of North American Indians*, by William C. Sturtevant, published by the Smithsonian Institution, 1984.)

If the anthropologists are correct, it would seem possible that some of the traditional Cup'ik stories might verify the theory. The stories of our ancestors do not mention any migration routes. But some scholars of Cup'ik history believe that if such a movement from Asia occurred, it would have been so gradual that the Cup'ik people might not have thought of it as a migration. They might instead have simply thought that over time they were ranging further east than their parents and grandparents had. Some traditional stories do talk about re-locations of villages at times in the past. Villages were established in areas where animals and fish were easily accessible.

The Cup'ik View

The Cup'ik Elders do not talk explicitly about how our people came to be, but we have traditional stories related to the origins of our people. Here we provide (through audiostreaming) two of those traditional stories, narrated by Cup'ik Elders. One is "My First Ancestor," narrated by my grandfather, Joe Friday, who was a well-known Cup'ik storyteller. The second is Civuliaqatuk's Story, told by Elders of Chevak community.

My First Ancestor

Civuliaqatuk's Story

Traditional and Biblical Views

Historically, shamans were the spiritual leaders of the Cup'ik people. They had powers beyond the physical and could do things considered impossible for any human being. They provided the moral support for survival. Without them, the Eskimos would not have survived. Shamans are discussed in detail in a separate section of this curriculum; the point I am making here is that when the Western missionaries arrived in the region, the Cup'ik people had a belief system that had existed for hundreds of years.

The missionaries that came to this region around 1900 converted the Cup'ik to Catholicism and had a great influence on how our people lived. The priests became the authorities, shaping the lives of our people in ways that can be seen today. In the past, many of our people worked for the priests without pay. The first priests who came to this area were Joseph M. Treca, S.J. Father Fox, and Father Convert. (Students interested in reading about the missionaries in our region can refer to a number of sources, including *Kingdom of the Seal*, by Aloysius Menager, SJ, Chicago, Loyola Press, 1962; and *Life on the Alaskan Mission*, by Francis Barnum, SJ, Woodstock College Press, 1983.)

There was conflict between the shamans and the priests. The missionaries questioned our Cup'ik beliefs. In their eyes, we were nomadic and uncivilized people without beliefs. But it's interesting that many of the teachings of the church were actually similar to the teachings of our Elders. I remember one Elder saying "When the priest first came and taught us the values, I thought back to my father, who spoke of things that were no different from those [now being taught] our people." My grandfather also once told some students, "If you want to learn the values of our ancestors, go to church and listen."

One such element of similarity is *Cillam Cua*, which refers to our Creator. Our Elders often told us to do things in the open because the being that is above all beings is always watching us. In some of the traditional masks made by our people, the "eye of awareness" indicates that someone is always watching us.

The missionaries banished many of our traditional rituals and feasts. Eskimo dances were abolished as well. As a result, many of our feasts and rituals no longer exist except as forms of entertainment of the people—for example, performances by Eskimo dance groups. While still recognizing the importance of traditional Cup'ik beliefs, our people now largely accept Biblical values and beliefs. In the last sections of this lesson, we talk about history as recorded in traditional Cup'ik stories and describe some of the major festivals.

Historical and Cemetery Sites

Historically, each Cup'ik and Yup'ik tribe had its own subsistence lands, which other tribes knew and respected without the need for written documents. Two tribes might have verbal agreements about lands, just as the first Native Americans did thousands of years ago. Our history has no record of Cup'ik or Yup'ik tribes fighting over land. A hunter from one tribe could trespass on lands of another tribe, as long as he was getting food for his family. Our traditional belief was that how we treat others is how they treat us; if we treat others with respect, they will treat us with respect.

The historic and cemetery sites around Chevak cover a radius of roughly 50 to 100 miles out from the village. The people of Chevak consider these our subsistence lands—lands that have no boundaries. There are many individual sites all over this broad area around Chevak. When the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act was passed in 1971, it required the Bureau of Indian Affairs to document these historic sites and turn them over to the regional corporations formed under terms of the act. If it had not been for that project, some of those sites might have been forgotten.

The project also helped me learn valuable information about my own ancestry. By acting as an interpreter for Elders who spoke no English, I learned many things. I learned that the Manokinak, Kashunak, and Aprun rivers were the direct ancestral lands of the Cup'ik people. I learned to locate sites on maps and discovered what historic events took place at various sites. I learned who had houses at individual sites and what kinds of activities took place at those sites. I also learned which types of subsistence foods people gathered most intensively at different sites—which showed me the types of food available in different areas.

One of the oldest sites recorded is Englullugmiut, estimated through carbon dating to be 4,000 years old. This site can be identified on maps.

History as Told in Traditional Stories

The Elders have passed on stories of our people from one generation to the next. Those stories are important for many reasons. They reflect the way our ancestors lived and important events that happened to them. They also teach us important survival techniques. Survival over the centuries for the Cup'ik people meant being knowledgeable about the land. And people became knowledgeable because they were spoken to, mentored, nurtured and well cared for. The Elders regarded a person with no teachers (an orphan, for example) as one who would likely perish in the harsh environment. In the view of the Elders, it is best to listen to advice—whether you agree with it at the time—because the knowledge may be useful for the future. The wisdom of our forefathers is precious; in the old days, sometimes orphans would listen at the doorways of other families, to hear the stories being told and so "steal" the valuable knowledge for themselves.

Some of the traditional Cup'ik stories talk about a time long ago, when the land was thin. The Elders said that in this time, men had specially carved walking sticks (*legcik* in Cup'ik) with barbs on the hook—because some parts of the land were quicksand. They used the sticks to pull themselves out of the quicksand, if they fell through the ground.

Cangerlaagpiit (Epidemics)

Epidemics (*Cangerlaagpiit*) periodically devastated our people over the years. The first was around 1840-42 and was a smallpox epidemic—in Cup'ik, *arumeng*, a sore of the body. Other epidemics were measles, mumps, whooping cough, diphtheria, tuberculosis, and influenza.

Some of our traditional stories talk about those epidemics. An especially bad one was the influenza epidemic (*cangerliigpak*) that swept through the villages in 1918-20. The shamans described it as "coming as fast as the blowing snow." Elders recall this period as the "dark days of our people." There were many heartbroken families. One story says, "The families in one household looked like they were sleeping, but they were all dead." In villages where many people lived before the epidemic, only a few survived.

Healthy people were forced to take care of the dead—and so many died at the same time that they had to be buried in a dugout sod house. The people from Scammon Bay and Hooper Bay would pile up many bodies into one grave during the winter. Some villages were completely wiped out. These places no longer existed after the epidemic: Cingigmiut and Amigtulirmiut (Black River area), as well as villages around the Kusilvak Mountain (Kassiglurmiut).

The influenza epidemic was especially hard on young adults, and as a result many children were left orphans. Traditional stories verify the high incidence of orphans in many villages at this time. The many orphans left after epidemics had no fathers to teach them how to survive in a harsh environment. But the value of the knowledge and wisdom contained in the Cup'ik stories became evident. The Elders tell us that orphans often acquired important knowledge by listening in on stories being told—and were able to survive.

Unfortunately, many children also died in the epidemic; an Elder from the old village of Kashunak recalled that about thirty children died in just one winter. Nowadays, many people believe that more children could have survived the epidemic, if their parents had known how to care for them. But because they had not encountered this kind of sickness before, many parents did not know what to do. For example, when temperatures of the children became extremely high, many parents did not attempt to cool them down. Some who did survive—and who are still alive today—may owe their survival to parents who had better

information about how to care for them.

A Cangerlaagpiit Story

An old Kashunak story related to this period is about a great and intelligent hunter (*nukalpiaq*) who entered a *qaygiq* (men's house, described later in this lesson). Inside the *qaygiq* were men who were gloomy and sad because they had lost their families in an epidemic. The man gave them this advice: "No matter how sad you may be, laugh with all your might—even if you may not want to." He added, "As soon as I complete the story I am going to tell you, burst out laughing." Everyone listened attentively as the man told them, "I saw a dog carrying the head of a small newborn with red hair." Then everyone pretended to laugh—and suddenly the fake laughs turned to real laughter.

The wise hunter advised the men to laugh because by laughing at death, the men wiped away the spirit of sickness and death. This story, told to me by Joe Friday, marks the end of the epidemic era and shows how traditional stories document important events in Cup'ik history. Even though there was little hope of survival during these times of epidemics, our people went through this dark period and did survive.

Traditional Festivals

Like the traditional stories we've just discussed, traditional festivals and rituals are also important in the history of the Cup'ik people. Those festivals and rituals marked the change of seasons, successful hunts, and other special occasions. They show the deep ties between the Cup'iks and the land that sustained them. They show how our people valued gift-giving and sharing. As I noted earlier, the Western missionaries suppressed traditional Cup'ik festivals—and as a result most are no longer celebrated. But it is important for our children to know those traditions that reflect our culture.

Below I describe some traditional Cup'ik festivals and rituals. The qaygiq (men's house) played a big part in many festivals and also in the broader life of the community. So I first describe the *qaygiq* before talking about specific festivals.

Qaygiq (Men's House)

The *qaygiq* (men's house) was very important in the Cup'ik community. It was where boys and men received formal education. The Elders taught them about survival techniques and trades men needed to know in Cup'ik society. These skills included becoming good hunters, fishermen, carvers, Eskimo dance drummers, and leaders of dances and ceremonies. They also needed to learn about the land and the sea and traditional stories and legends.

Men ate, slept, and took firebaths in the *qaygiq*. They also practiced Eskimo dances for special celebrations like the bladder festival, described later in this lesson. During every day activities, the *qaygiq* was reserved for the men. Women showed their faithfulness to their husbands by bringing food to the *qaygiq* daily; men in turn showed their faithfulness by hunting and providing food for their families.

During festivals and special ceremonies, women were welcomed into the *qaygiq*. The women were the backbone of special occasions. Without their ability to prepare and weave grass, the ceremonies would not

have been complete. In one special gift exchange festival (*petugtaryaraq*, described later in this lesson), the women took over the qaygiq and prepared dances and songs for the men.

Below we talk first about how the *qaygiq* was built and then describe more about the *qaygiq's* role in Cup'ik society.

Construction of the Qaygiq

The *qaygiq* was a large, semi-subterranean sod house, with a dugout area below ground and a domed roof above ground. All men in the village participated in construction of the *qaygiqs*. They dug the ground down several feet and then lined the dugout walls by stacking and fitting large, heavy driftwood logs; this required good supervision and management. Then they built a dome-shaped roof with logs inlaid on the sides of the dugout walls. This wood frame is called *qerratarutet*.

In the center of the roof the men left an opening or window. The window was removable and was made of the intestines of a whale or walrus. The window was removed during firebaths to allow smoke out. During the winter, frost developed on the window, making the *qaygiq* dim. The men removed the frost by patting the window (*pategluku*). According to tradition, the men were not to put that frost from the window outside, but rather on the side of the underground passageway (described below). The reason for putting the frost there is not known.

After they had built the driftwood frame, the men would lay grass all over the domed roof, for insulation. The laying of grass is called *eviutet*. Then they cut strips of high-tundra vegetation, consisting of blackberry bushes and small willow plants, and put those strips on top of the grass, with the vegetated part on the inside. This method of extracting and using high-tundra vegetation is called *pakigtaat*. The builders placed *pakigtaat* all over the grass, leaving no large openings. Then they took brown sod, which they had previously cut and made into slabs, and laid the sod over the *pakigtaat*, starting from the bottom of the frame and working up toward the top. This tough sod, called *kiitaat*, kept the rain out of the *qaygiq*. Finally, they filled any remaining gaps with slushy mud (*kataneraq*).

The *qaygiq* had two doorways and a fire pit at the center. The *kepneq* was an above-ground door, used from early spring to late fall and closed off during the winter. The *pugyaraq* was an underground entryway used during the winter. The *pugyaraq* had an opening on the ground level outside and then a passage below ground. At the entrance to the *qaygiq* from the underground passageway was a burrow step—a step elevated above the passageway floor and with both sides flattened. All *qaygiqs* had a burrow step, called *tutemkaq;* the significance of the *tutemkaq* is not known.

Ivory tusk handles were situated at both sides of the entrance to the *qaygiq* from the *pugyaraq*, so people coming through the passageway could lift themselves up into the *qaygiq*. Younger children had a hard time getting in. Most of the time, they had to grab the handles, put their heads to one side of the entrance, fling their body forward and roll sideways into the *qaygiq*. Men pulled the smallest boys in and out. Click on image to enlarge

Seating and Sleeping Areas in the Qaygiq

Each man had his place in the *qaygiq*. At the center was a fire pit, and men and boys of different ages had

specific seating and sleeping areas along the walls. The entrance wall (*ualirneq*) was reserved for the Elders. The boys (*ayaakutat* or *ayagyuga*) sat along the walls, the older boy toward the corners and the younger boys toward the center of the walls on either side. The older men sat at the corners. The side walls are called *nakirneq*. The young unmarried men (*nekevyuut*) were seated along the farthest wall (*egkuq*), with the oldest of those at the corners (*kangiraq*) and the youngest toward the middle. All men learned the seating arrangements, and all men respected each other's seating and sleeping areas. When a man was not in the *qaygiq*, others could use his place, but would move when he came in.

Seal oil lamps were put at the middle of both side walls. On either side of the lamps were seated two of the youngest boys. In the center of the farthest wall was another lamp, and on each side of the lamp the youngest *nekevyuut* were seated.

All the men in the *qaygiq* had grass mats to sleep on. Women braided the mats from tall bladed grass found around the ponds in highland areas of the tundra. The mats were well cared for, so they would last a long time. The men placed their belongings around their sleeping and seating areas, usually on the wall, or upper ceiling side of the *qaygiq*. These belongings included the tools each man had—such as carving knives, hand drills, hand chisels, and bow drills.

The drums, made of stomach membrane (intestine) of whale or walrus, had a special place in the *qaygiq*. Usually, they were placed at the corners, or in other areas where the heat of the fire pit would not affect

them. The drums were used in practices for feasts, as well as for shamans' rituals. Click on image to enlarge

Life in The Qaygiq

The men were required to sleep in the *qaygiq* without any bedding; they had just their parkas and sealskin boots. They trained to survive in the cold day in and day out. They got used to the cold as an everyday condition. Most important, they trained to make their spirits strong. A man's spirit was critical to helping him survive the cold. Men strengthened their spirits by going through the many hardships of life.

After spending so much time hardening themselves to the cold, the men welcomed warmth as soothing to the body and spirit. They took firebaths in the *qayqiq* every day or at least every other day. Men donated wood for the firebaths. They chopped the wood in the *qaygiq* and stacked it in a special arrangement in the center of the fire pit.

When the fire was first lit, the whole building became very smoky, before the smoke escaped through the window at the top of the *qaygiq*. The men bit special mouthpieces that covered their mouths and noses and prevented the smoke from burning them and going into their lungs. These mouthpieces were made of the fine shavings of driftwood, usually spruce.

When the fire got hot, the men would turn to and fro to keep from being burned; sometimes they would be burned anyway, and would then splash on cold water to ease the pain. The intense heat penetrated deep, reaching the bones of the men. They felt very good after these penetrating firebaths, with clear minds that enabled them to solve problems. Often after a firebath they would talk in soothing voices, making plans for upcoming events. Firebaths were also used to heat the *qaygiq* before dance festivals or ceremonies.

Elders' Teaching

Elders who could no longer hunt or do physical work advised the other men and boys. Elders were well respected, and younger men and boys shared their food with them.

The Elders are called *teggneq* (one) or *teggneret* (more than one). In every society, there were two wise men advising the other men and boys. This was true not only in Chevak but in Hooper Bay, Scammon Bay, Tununak, Newtok, and many other places.

The Elders advised the younger generation about their future and disciplined them for wrongdoing. When two Elders spoke, no one disturbed them, talked, or even asked questions. When men sought answers to things the Elders had said, they found these answers by searching within themselves rather than by asking the Elders.

The Elders often taught survival methods, especially about surviving on the ocean, where hunters had to go for the main source of food—seals. Elders taught how to survive in extreme conditions, and often Elders told the men: "Never panic, because it can kill you; always use common sense."

The Elders also made arrangements for various feasts and community activities. The *qaygiq* played a major part in community activities, as we will discuss below.

Background: The Season of Festivals

In old Qissunaq, the first village of Chevak, the people had many festivals before the winter solstice. The leaders of the village, the Elders, stated the reason this way: "We have to start our festivals before the sun sits down." That statement meant that they had to start their festivals before the shortest day of the year, which is December 21.

In the middle of the day, every day, the men measured the height of the sun. A man would extend his open hand toward the horizon of the sun, holding four fingers horizontally between the horizon and the sun. By closing one eye, he could determine when the winter solstice would start. If the sun landed between his index and middle fingers, this indicated winter solstice—or the "sitting of the sun." The sunrise and the sunset were also marked by a stick, since the horizon is outlined as the sun rises and sets.

In Qissunaq, there were two *qaygiq* where feasts, dancing, and firebathing took place. One *qaygiq*, called *uniqullek*, was in the northern part of the village, and the other, *qaygicuaraq*, was at the southern mount. The membership of each qaygiq was mostly determined according to family clans and by availability of space. Each year, Elders and other men from the two *qaygiq* took turns sponsoring the festivals, after consultation and agreement between them.

Tengmiarun

Among the first of the seasonal celebrations the Cup'ik people had long ago was *Tengmiarun*, which was held toward the end of the summer season. This festival is a form of potlatch. Food, clothing, and dances were prepared far in advance.

The people knew the season of the year when *Tengmiarun* took place, but the Elders usually decided which day the celebration would be held. They would tell a young man to announce the celebration by climbing on top of a *qaygiq* during the night and hollering: Aaaaah! Aaaaah! *Avayaq nanguuq! Avayaq nanguuq!* Sometimes they had a hard time finding a young man to holler for them, but if a young man was told to do this or that, he had to do it right away. When they heard this hollering in the night, the people knew they

would be having *Tengmiarun* the next night.

The people used little birds as part of the *Tengmiarun* celebration. Before the celebration, children gathered birds they had caught, skinned them, and put them on sticks with their wings spread out.

In preparation for the festival, lots of young men then gathered in the two *qaygiqs* in the old village of Qissunaq. One *qaygiq* was for the *Uniqullermiut*, and the other one was for the *Qaygicuaremiut*. But since they were all from the same village, members of both *qaygiqs* did the same things for the festival. The young men and the ones with fathers at the *qaygicuaraq* brought in the bladders of birds they had caught. The bladders were hung and their contents removed.

After the young men gathered in the *qaygiq*, the little girls came in, bringing in bits of food and doing a little dance with motions. Most of the dancers were little girls, but if women wanted to dance, they could join the girls and dance as well.

Families of the boys involved in the festival brought clothing and utensils to give as gifts. The Elders received the best gifts and food, and the rest were distributed according to the age and status of the recipients and the availability of different items. Spiritually, the boys benefited by giving gifts. If the recipients were satisfied, their thankfulness had a positive effect on the boys, helping them become good hunters or live prosperous lives.

Itertaaq

Itertaaq was a festival that took place in September and lasted five days. *Itertaaq* means "to go into the houses of the people." In some ways it resembled trick or treating during Halloween. Men and boys sang and went from house to house; the women and girls stayed at home, giving out food. The elders and men joined the boys on the first and fifth days of the festival, because those were the days when the best food was given out. In between the first and the last day the "not-so-good" food was distributed, and only boys went from house to house.

On the first day of the *Itertaaq* celebration, men and boys took bowls, went about 50 to 100 feet out of the village, and sang a song. In this festival, singing a song is called *maruaq*, although the literal meaning of that word is "howling of a dog." The eldest man led the men and boys in singing a song about the red fox and an old lady. After singing the song, the young men and boys started going around into the houses, one after another, crouching down low, stomping their feet and making oohing sounds. They always moved clockwise from house to house—never counter clockwise.

The houses were semi-subterranean sod houses, like the *qaygiq*, with underground passageways leading to the houses and acting as cold traps in the winter. (The sod houses are described in detail in Lesson III.) The houses smelled clean and fresh from the aroma of the Labrador tea, or *ayuq*. The entrances to the underground passageways were lit with seal oil lamps. The woman of each household dressed in her best clothing. On the first day of the festival, she passed out the best food she had—seal meat, dry fish, frozen fish, beluga skin, dried meat, dried herring, oiled poke, white or salmon fish, and Eskimo ice cream *(akutaq)*.

The next three evenings, just the young men and boys went from house to house again, but received second-hand food—like small parts of food and small pieces of dried salmon fish eggs.

On the fifth and final day, everybody participating in the *Itertaaq* celebration painted their faces with white

clay and imprints of black soot. The older men once again joined the boys going from one house to the next. Again, as on the first day of *Itertaaq*, the women passed out the best foods. The women again dressed in their finest clothes, and the air in the sod houses once again smelled of the sweet aroma of the Labrador tea.

The painting of faces on the fifth day is called *urasqaq*, and it commemorates the time the youngsters of Qissunaq encountered a supernatural event, which allowed them to walk underground. Every year before the *Itertaaq* celebration began, the Elders of the village told the story of the time the boys went underground and finally came back; they also advised the boys on what to do if they encountered a supernatural being or happening.

Here is the traditional story as told by the Elders. One *Itertaaq* celebration, the young boys were as usual going from house to house. But when they tried to get out of one particular house, they could not come back up to the surface from the underground passageway. On and on they walked in pitch-black darkness. The people in the houses nearby could hear them talking to one another. Everyone in Qissunaq tried to get the boys out, but no one succeeded. Their voices faded away as they moved along in the blackness of the tunnel.

The boys wandered off from their village, still trying to find their way out. One family miles away from Qissunaq heard the voices of the young boys. The family grew scared because they thought the boys were demons—the living dead. They covered their underground doorway and sprinkled animal blood to cast the demons away. The voices came closer and then faded away. The boys might have been able to get out, if that family had not covered the entryway.

After a few days, the young boys came out through a cave hole in the volcano mountains about 60 miles east of Chevak. When the youngsters came out, they could not see for a while because they had spent too much time in the darkness. They didn't know where they were and none of the landmarks were familiar to them. The eldest of the boys told the others what to do next: "Line up behind me and close your eyes. Hold onto the boy ahead of you. We will be taking five steps forward, and we must do it at the same time. If any of you open your eyes, we will never find out where we are. All of you promise me that you will do exactly what I tell you to do. When I give the signal, take five steps forward." All the boys did exactly as their leader told them to do, and they found themselves just a few feet from Qissunaq.

After that incident, the shamans found out why the boys had been trapped underground: they had not painted their faces. So the shamans made a rule, that on the fifth day of *Itertaaq*, everyone had to *urasqaq* their faces. The boys were encouraged not to wash off the white clay paint until the next day or risk getting diarrhea. They advised the boys about how to avoid being trapped underground: "If a house is unfamiliar, do not enter but walk backwards until you are out of the house. Also, if you encounter a demon—a living dead—walk backwards until you are out of the house."

Petugtaryaraq

Another Cup'ik festival from many centuries ago was P*etugtaryaraq*. This was the traditional exchanging of gifts that can be compared with the exchanging of Christmas gifts today. It took place in many villages of southwestern Alaska. It was held in December, before the winter solstice, which is on December 21. This was one of the last festivals the Cup'iks celebrated before the influence of the missionaries.

During the preparation for the *Petugtaryaraq* celebration, the men carved out small wooden images of the things they wanted the most—various types of clothing and food. One of the most wanted foods was

uqnaq, which is soup made of greens and the blood of seals. They tied the carvings with *tapraq* (skin rope or string) and hung them on the wall of the *qaygiq* facing the entranceway.

When all the men had hung their carved images, the women were called in. The women looked over the carvings and picked out items they were able to afford or make. All the carvings would be taken. While the women chose the carvings, the men did not say anything—but they would know who had picked their carving. Often, the men did not want their mothers, grandmothers, wives, aunts, or sisters to pick their carved images. They preferred that their cousins take the carvings. That is because the Cup'ik people find it humorous and challenging to provide hard-to-find gifts for one another —and cousins would tease each other and take up the challenge. Cousins would lavish one another with gifts and challenge each other to return with even better gifts, until one was unable to continue the gift exchange.

When the women finished making the gifts they returned to the *qaygiq*. Usually two young men directed each woman to the man she had made a gift for. The woman gave her gift and then told the man what she wanted in return; this is referred to as *aqngirqelluki*.

After receiving their gifts, the men started practicing Eskimo dance songs that they would sing for the women to dance to. The women disguised themselves like men. Some wore humorous masks and others painted their faces with black soot. They all wore old clothing so they were unrecognizable. They danced all night, and everyone had an enjoyable evening.

The next day the women took over the *qaygiq*. Like the men, they carved miniature wooden objects representing gifts they wanted and hung them on the furthest wall of the *qaygiq*. The men came in and picked out what they could afford to make. Again, all the carvings would be taken. Some of what the women wanted might be hard to get, but the men would try.

Then the women start practicing Eskimo dance songs. When they were finished practicing, the men gathered in the *qaygiq* and brought the gifts the women had asked for. Then the men went into the underground passageway leading to the *qaygiq* and dressed up as women, but with humorous masks or painted faces of black soot. Their roles were reversed during the Eskimo dances. The women sang and drummed while the men danced. Everyone had a lot of fun, especially cousins, who would exchange humorous remarks.

Ilvarig: The Bladder Festival

One of the major festivals of the Cup'ik people was *Ilvariq*—the bladder festival, which took place in November or early December. The Cup'ik people traditionally believed that the spirit of the seal was in the bladder—and the bladder festival honored the spirit of the seals and returned them to the sea. By honoring the seals, the Cup'iks hoped to insure continuing harvests. The people believed the seals had a *qaygiq* under the ocean, where the spirits of dead seals lived until returning in live seals the following spring. Hunters kept and cared for the bladders of seals they harvested each year to use in this festival.

Preparations for the festival began when the Elders chose five young men to go after wild celery (*ikituggsuq*), considered a sacred plant of the bladder festival. The young men would first take fire baths in the *qaygiq*. After drying off, they put on only their *qaspeqs* (outer lining of a parka) and sat solemnly, without saying much to each other. A seal oil lamp was placed behind the boys and two large wooden bowls were placed in front them.

Women then came in, bringing food and going from left to right, allowing each boy to have a bite. This was done until all the women of each household had presented food. The leftovers were then placed in the

large wooden bowls. The boys had one bite at a time, eating until they became tremendously full and did not feel up to doing things.

When the women had stopped coming, the five young men dressed in all their clothes. Then a man with his face covered with black soot and wearing a sealskin cap (of the type used for fire bathing), faced the young men to sing. All the young men stood up to face him, with their arms extended up toward the ceiling. The young men were in a column, all in the same still stance, ready to dance.

The singer began beating his drum slowly and mumbling the first verse of the song softly to the young men. While the singer sang, the young men stood without dancing, still holding their arms extended up towards the ceiling.

FIRST VERSE:

Aaya-nga-ya iya-nga-rra-ya-nga-ya iyaang

Aaya-nga-ya iyaa-nga-rra-ya-ngarra ayaa

Yanga-rranga rairraa yaa-nga-rra

Aya-nga-ya iyaa-nga-rra aanga-rraingaa-aa-aa

The singer started singing the second verse and the young men began to notice the strain from keeping their arms extended up. If anyone dropped his arms lower than the rest, he was asked to keep them up higher.

SECOND VERSE:

Nunamiunun uulusqumaa

Nunamiunun uulusqumaa

Nunamiunun uulusqumaa, nunamiunun

Yanga-rranga rairra ya ngarai

Aaya-nga-ya iya-nga-rra-ya-anga-rranga-aa-aa-aa

Then three other men who sat beside the singer took up their drums and sang the first verse of the song to the boys, who started to dance in a pushing motion toward the sky. Their whole bodies were in movement and their legs were bent at each drum beat.

FIRST VERSE (repeated):

Aaya-riga-ya iya-nga-rra-ya-nga-ya iyaang

Aaya-nga-ya iyaa-nga-rra-ya-ngarra ayaa

Yanga-rranga rairraa yaa-nga-rra

Aya-nga-ya iyaa-nga-rra aanga-rraingaa-aa-aa

When the first verse of the first song was done, the boys turned in the opposite direction and the drummers start drumming faster and harder, singing this second song:

FIRST VERSE:

Agiya-rragiya

Agiya-a rragiya

Agiya rragiya, eggnarra

Agiya rragiya

Agiya-a rragiya

Rragiya rragiya, eggngarriaa-aa-aa-ai

The men paused here, but kept on drumming. The young men were fighting their tiredness to keep on dancing. The drummers then began to sing the second verse.

SECOND VERSE:

Ikitugaam qayaanganii

Tusquma kuggayuna rragiya rragiya eggngarra

Ikitugaam qayaanganii

Tusquma kuggayuna rragiya rragiya eggngarraa-aa-aa-ai Click here for video clip

After the second verse was sung, the singers and drummers sang the first verse again. While they sang, four of the five young men went out, one by one, to circle the village. One stayed until the song was done. The people giggled at how tired the remaining boy became.

While the young men danced, small boys who wanted to have a bite to eat from the two large wooden bowls waited stark naked for the young men to go out. Once they left, the boys rolled into the *qaygiq* one after another, side by side around the fire pit. The foods they were most likely to eat were oily white or salmon poked fish.

After all the boys ate their favorite foods, they ran a complete circle around the *qaygiq*. They lined up and danced as the previous young men had, with their arms extended up towards the ceiling. But these small boys ate with seal oil dripping from their mouths and made funny faces, trying to keep their arms up even though they were very tired. The men who sat observing and singing laughed and giggled at the boys. This was one event where everyone laughed laughter, and the Elders did not discipline the boys.

When the five young men chosen to gather wild celery had finished circling the village, they were seated in

the *ualirneq* area (usually reserved for the Elders) and slept for the night. The bearded sealskin used for the container of wild celery stems was put beside them. The next morning they went out dragging a sled to gather wild celery stems.

The first wild celery they found they dug down to the root of the dead plant. They dug the snow around the plant by hand, and when they reached the frozen ground, they chipped away down to the very root. Then they placed a small piece of food where the root of the plant had been. This placing of a small piece of food was done for centuries, but we no longer know the meaning behind it. The young men cut the rest of the dead wild celery stems at ground level until they had a bundle.

When they returned to the village, the young men tied the bundle of wild celery and placed it by the window of the *qaygiq*. Then all the men in the *qaygiq* took a firebath. After everyone was relaxed and the *qaygiq* was warm, the bundle of wild celery was brought down and a selected person carried it clockwise around the *qaygiq*. When he reached the *ualirneq* wall area, the man carrying the celery stood the bundle vertically and evened out the stems. If the bundle leaned to one side, he picked it up and dropped it until the bundle stood straight. All the men had to agree on when the bundle was well leveled.

Then a bowl of seal oil—about one gallon—was poured evenly over the top of the wild celery bundle. A selected person then lifted the bundle and checked for any drops of seal oil. If he saw a drop of seal oil, this indicated hardship in finding subsistence food. But if he did not find any drops of seal oil, it indicated plenty of subsistence food and was a sign that the celery had accepted the gift of oil. Then the bundle was untied and spread out to dry in the elevated shelf beds of the *qaygiq*.

During the evening, the women brought in frozen fish with seal oil. The seal oil was contained in a dried seal-gut container. Each time a woman entered, the man beside the door announced her last name and pushed her bowl of frozen fish towards the furthest wall.

After that, the women brought in the bladders covered with grass mats (*ikaraliitat*). Then the women put on seal-gut raincoats and began to dance. After the women danced, the men opened their grass mats and worked on their bladders, to soften them enough so they could be blown up. They tied the opening of the bladder with a thin strip of leather and hung them up to dry. All the people who were closely related worked together.

Cords were strung across the *qaygiq*, with all the bladders prepared by closely related family members hung evenly on one cord. The cords might be either straight across the *qaygiq* or angled to one side, according to family traditions. Bladders of seals that had been injured but got away, or of seals that had been killed but sank underwater before the hunters could reach them, were represented by wing feathers of seagulls.

The bladders were strung across the *qaygiq* for five days. After the fifth day, the men took the bladders down and seated them (*aqumlluki*) by placing them to one side of the *qaygiq* in a large suspended column. The bladders were then seated for five days. After that, a harpoon was hung horizontally on the ceiling, and the bladders were then hung on the harpoon. Again, the closely related family worked together, hanging the bladders according to their family traditions, passed down over time. The bladders then hung on the harpoon to dry for five days.

At one time, the people only allowed the bladders to be seated for three days. According to tradition, the spirits of the bladders once took a boy back to where they were from. When the boy returned as a young man, he brought a message from the spirits—that the bladders should be seated for an additional two days, for a total of five.

The festivals we've just discussed here celebrated the seasonal life-style of the Cup'ik people---a life-style that in many ways continues today. Lesson III describes that life-style on detail.

General Objectives of Lesson III

The students will be able to describe how to build a sod house.

The students will be able to identify how to harvest sources of subsistence foods in the animal kingdom used by their people.

The students will be able to identify how to harvest major plants used for subsistence purposes by their people.

The students will be able to outline the traditional lifestyle and the of their people.

The students will be able to outline the timeline of seasons used by their people for harvesting foods.

The students will be able to identify and map traditional family sites.

The students will be able to describe use accurately identify landmarks.

The students will be able to learn appropriate behavior when in the presence of Elders.

The students will learn how to show respect and love toward others.

Activities Related to Lesson III

Gather information from Elders using interviews and other research to make blueprints of sodhouses.

Build a sodhouse using appropriate material.

Use the sodhouse for putting on programs tradtionally done in the school.

Draw a map of hunting, fishing, camping sites used by local families.

Go on hunting trips with knowledgeable hunting companions.

Participate in subsistence gathering activities during the school year.

Learn how to cut up and harvest seals.

Read material on local folklore.

Produce books on how to make Eskimo ice cream from harvested berries.

Produce websites showing community projects.

Work on a community project that illustrates to Elders new skills learned on showing respect toward others.

Lesson III: Our Cup'ik Way of Life

Introduction

This lesson describes the Cup'ik way of life. It includes discussion of both contemporary and ancestral ways, to help students understand our lives today. I hope this description will give outsiders a view of who the Cup'ik people are as we move into the twenty-first century. But I wrote the lesson primarily for our students, as a way of preserving information about their ancestry. It is critical for the schools to teach our children about their heritage. It is also very important for students to have access to materials such as this curriculum, written by a member of their own community.

Knowing when and how to hunt, fish, and gather allowed the Cup'ik people to survive for centuries. They established villages and camps where they could get the fish and game they needed at different times of the year. Traditionally these settlements were within a reasonable distance of the Bering Sea and near rivers and lakes, which not only provided fish and game but were also vital transportation routes. They used materials available on the tundra to build sod houses that protected them from the harsh climate of southwest Alaska.

The seasons of the year have always determined the patterns of Cup'ik life. In the late fall and winter, our ancestors lived in their winter homes, which were permanent villages, mainly along the Qissunaq, Aprun, and Manokinak rivers. Food was hardest to get during the cold, dark months of December, January, and February—but the people trapped mink and other fur-bearers and fished under the ice for species like blackfish, stickleback and needlefish that are available year-round.

In the spring, the men went out to hunts seals in the Bering Sea. Families sometimes had spring camps on lakes or rivers, so they could harvest muskrats and some species of fish—especially in the late spring, when disintegrating ice made seal hunting more difficult. In the summer, families traveled first to fish camps and later to berry camps. Sometimes they also had fall camps, where they did various subsistence activities before returning to their winter homes.

Individual Cup'ik families traditionally had their own hunting, trapping, and fishing sites. Other people respected these sites and did not trespass. Virtually the only sources of income for many families were sealskins and furs of muskrat, mink, and fox. They bartered those skins and furs with traders for tea, flour, and other items they needed for hunting.

Below, I first describe the sod houses that traditionally provided permanent dwellings in villages and also

sometimes were built in seasonal camps. Such sod houses are seldom built today, but a number still exist and are maintained for seasonal use. After that, I turn to a description of the hunting and fishing activities that sustained the Cup'ik people through the seasons.

Traditional Sod Houses

The Cup'ik people traditionally lived in semi-subterranean sod houses with driftwood frames. These houses had two entrances—one for the summer months and one for the winter months —and a window cover of whale or walrus stomach membrane, generally at the center of the roof. The summer entrance led directly into the house and was covered with sod during the winter. The winter entrance was an underground tunnel that acted as a cold trap—people coming into the house first went down three or four steps into the tunnel (or passageway) and then back up into the house. Sod houses were quite adequate to withstand the cold, harsh climate of western Alaska, but they had no heating system—so people kept warm inside by wearing adequate clothing.

Sod houses had to be built in good, dry spots, because they were partly underground. After finding a dry spot, the builders dug down three or four feet, to create the floor of the house, but left a sleeping area elevated about two feet off the floor. Then they framed the dugout walls and the roof with driftwood. Finding the right kind of driftwood took many hours.

Once the frame was up, it was then layered with grass as insulation. Then the grass was covered with vegetated sod, consisting of blackberry and willow plants, which were extracted from the *nunapik* (highland area); this vegetated covering is called *pakigtaat*. This vegetated sod, which is about five to six inches thick, was layered over the grass, with the vegetated side down. Then the vegetation was covered with *kiitaaq* (sod), extracted from the ground. This sod is not mud but thick, strong brown dirt, consisting of the tangled roots of plants and grasses. It kept the rain from going into the house when laid from the bottom to top, in shingled style. Finally, any remaining cracks were covered with soft, slushy mud called *kataneq*.

The cooking area was often located in a sort of outside room, right off the underground- passageway, with an opening to let smoke out. This fireplace, or *kenirvik*, was used only for cooking and not to heat the building.

During the warmer months, water sometimes seeped up from the ground and collected inside the house. The people would say, "The water has blown up," and would dig a hole at the corner of the house so the water could collect there. As long as the houses were occupied, the water would dry up. But if no one was living in the house for a while, a lot of moisture and mildew would develop.

A lot of frost would develop on the ceiling of the house in the winter, as a result of people's breathing. When the frost build-up became very thick, it was scraped off. In the coldest months of the year, ice bulbs formed on the floor and frost on the ceiling.

Sometimes when the weather turned milder, or a south wind developed, bringing warm, wet weather, the people would take the opportunity to get rid of the frost inside their sod houses. They first removed the ice window—or whale or walrus stomach membrane—and replaced it with wood or other material so that the heat would not escape. Then they covered up their belongings, built a stack of driftwood directly under the window, and set the driftwood on fire to remove the frost. All the frost that had built up over the winter melted, causing the whole house to become dripping wet.

When the first fire died down, they set another stack of driftwood on fire. At the end of the second fire, the frost would have totally melted and the house would be dry. This method of removing frost is called *ekevkaq*. When people moved to camps, where they sometimes also had sod houses, they first removed ice in this manner before moving in.

Hunting and Fishing by the Seasons

Our Cup'ik ancestors relied on their physical strength to help them survive the harsh environment. Men spent much of their time from January to October paddling *qayaqs*, looking for food for their families. When they were going out onto sea ice, they often carried small sleds, so they could carry and pull their *qayaqs* across ice if they had to. They often carried their sleds on the top of the back of the *qayaq* while they paddled, even during the summer. They would also sometimes pull their *qayaqs* across land. Using a sled prevented wear and tear on the *qayaq* 's cover. The sleds could also act as containers, for extra supplies or for a hunter's catch.

Each man knew his mental and physical limits. All the hunters had to have a mental map of the land within a radius of fifty to one hundred miles of their villages. Sometimes they paddled as much as fifty miles in a single day. They took advantage of river currents. For example, if the hunters were going inland to hunt, they waited for the high tide to arrive. When they were going downriver, they used low tide currents.

Traditionally, Cup'ik hunters learned important information through stories told in the *qaygiq*—the men's house (described in Lesson II). Hunters also exchanged stories out on the trail. The men used common sense to help guide them in all situations. While hunting, they always tried to avoid danger. Most men had a hunting companion, or *aipaq*. They planned all *qayaq* trips in advance and used shortcuts whenever possible. (Those shortcuts (*civ'lleq*), which the Cup'ik people created by making new, shorter channels linking bends in the rivers, are described in Lesson II.) Hunting parties set up in overnight camps at sites where the wood supply was plentiful. They prepared meals on open fires and enjoyed tea after each meal (as we still do today).

They brought home the game they had harvested when it became too burdensome to carry around. Families were thankful for the food, and it was a joyous time for the children, when they greeted their fathers after a long absence.

Winter Sites

Winter was the time when fish and game was hardest to get, so the Cup'ik people concentrated on stocking up during the spring, summer, and fall. But they were able to harvest a few species of fish and game during the winter. Blackfish, for instance, were available throughout the winter and were caught in wooden traps at various sites—in the early winter in streams close to lakes and in late winter at the mouths of sloughs. Blackfish can get oxygen by forcing air through their gills. So if the people knew blackfish were in a particular place, they would cut a hole in the ice and put a basket trap a few inches below the surface; when the fish came up through the hole to gulp air, they would be caught in the trap. This method of catching fish was used in late winter (February and March). The Cup'ik name for the process of blackfish coming up for air is *puget*. Sticklebacks were another fish the people could sometimes get in winter. They caught stickleback in dip nets.

The families concentrated on trapping mink in early winter when the lakes and rivers became frozen. They

skinned and dried mink and other fur-bearing animals. After traders arrived in the region, they began bartering the furs for household goods and clothing and sometimes guns. By the 1920s or so, a few were able to trap so many animals that they could barter for boats and motors. These first boats are called *tuqtut*, or slow first combustible engines. These hunters were called *nukalpiat* —the fortunate, skilled hunters. Today, a few people trap. Fur prices are low, and there are others ways of acquiring money—like working for wages or getting welfare benefits.

Spring Seal Hunting

The seal holds a very important place in the Cup'ik culture (as discussed in Lesson II), and spring seal hunting has been vital to the Cup'ik people for hundreds of years.

Traditional Hunts for Bearded Seals

Traditionally, the Cup'ik people gathered in camps along the Bering Sea coast in the spring (from March to about the first week of June). These spring camps were situated at the mouths of the rivers, giving hunters close access to the sea. The men used *qayaqs* to hunt seals; they transported the *qayaqs* from the villages to the hunting camps by dog team.

The men went out to hunt seals whenever the weather was favorable and calm. Long ago, before Western traders arrived in the region, our ancestors used only harpoons to hunt seals. They pursued bearded seals (which can weigh 600 pounds) while the seals slept and sunbathed on ice flows away from the shore. In their *qayaqs*, the hunters cautiously and quietly stalked the seals. When a hunter got close enough to a seal, he would thrust a harpoon into its body. He then quickly moved onto an ice floe to hold the line until the seal became tired, and then killed it by hitting it on the head.

The hunters pulled the dead seals onto the ice floes and removed the skin and blubber from the meat. They put that skin and blubber in the middle of the *qayaq*, to balance the weight of the catch. Then they cut the seal meat in pieces and evenly distributed the pieces at the front and the back of the *qayaq*. They kept just about everything, including the intestines and liver.

After reaching shore-fast ice, the hunters walked to their village, which was usually located within about two miles of the sea, carrying only the liver of the bearded seal. The Elders of the village would cut the liver up to eat. Young men of the village were selected to bring the rest of the catch to the household of the hunter. Then the successful hunter and his family followed the traditional Cup'ik ritual of sharing the meat and blubber with other households. Sometimes the hunter distributed all of his first catch of the season—to insure good luck in later hunts and to prove his manhood, as well as to show society he could take care of his wife and children.

Traditional Hunts for Smaller Seals

Our people traditionally used a special technique for hunting the smaller seals that feed in the river channels. As the high tide came into the channels and brought ice floes from the Bering Sea, alert hunters waited in columns. When the current turned and the ice began moving out, the men got ready for action when the low tide was evident. As the shoreline opened slowly, the hunters got ready to throw harpoons at seals that came up for air. They first checked the seals for alertness by pretending to throw their harpoons. Some seals would be too alert and dive suddenly, while others did not move and were therefore harpooned.

As the harpooned seals struggled to get away, the men pulled them to the shoreline and killed them.

As the seals popped up in front of them, the hunters thrust their harpoons at stationary seals, trying to embed the harpoon tip securely in the skin and blubber. Each moment was exciting for the hunters as they waited for their turn to strike the seals. The hunters were in a column, and the one closest to the seal would have the kill. Some men were successful, while others were not. And not all hunters got a chance on each high tide; some had to wait for the next tide. Each hunt was different, and those who failed to get seals on one tide were able to try again later.

After Western traders and others began arriving in southwest Alaska, the Cup'ik hunters began using rifles instead of harpoons for seal hunting—as they still do today. They waited in their *qayaqs* for seals to take breaths of air near them. When the seals were in close range, the hunters shot them with high-powered rifles. They rarely missed shots, because they checked their guns and targeted them for accuracy beforehand.

Today seal hunters no longer paddle their *qayaqs* into the Bering Sea, and instead use boats with motors. But seal hunting remains crucial to the lives and culture of the Cup'ik people. Rendered seal oil, for example, is still used in many ways—to flavor soups and as a dip for fish, among other things.

Rules for Seal Hunting

Over the years Cup'ik hunters developed a set of rules for hunting seals in the Bering Sea—which can be calm and beautiful but which can also be treacherous for the unwary. These rules are vital for anyone who ventures onto sea ice.

1. **Use a *legcik* when you are walking on sea ice.**

The *legcik* is a hooked walking stick with an ice pick at the bottom, and it is a necessity for all hunters. Check for thin ice in front of you, even if you walk only a short distance. The *legcik* can get you out of the water if you fall in.

2. **Avoid thin ice.**

Dark-colored ice is thin; light-colored ice is thicker and safer. If at any time you doubt the strength of the ice, check it with a *legcik*.

3. **When it is windy, avoid going beyond a big crack (*aaquqaq*) separating the shore-fast ice from the moving ice.**

On calm days it is safe to go beyond cracks that separate the shore-fast ice from the moving ice—these are cracks between the deeper and shallower areas along the shore. Big cracks develop in the ice because it rises and falls when the tide moves in and out.

4. **Observe all landmarks in the area—especially the icebergs —when you are seal hunting.**

On shallow sandbars, the ice is usually heaved up. These icebergs are called *evuneq* (large ice that is

formed in the shallow parts of the sea). You can use these landmarks to help determine where you are. Be observant everywhere you go!

5. **If there is a lot of loose ice during high tide, avoid going too far out at low tide or when the blocked ice opens along the solid shoreline.**

If you are going after the bearded seals when there is a lot of loose ice, go out to the deep waters. Once you catch a bearded seal, cut up the seal and go back as fast you can.

6. **If ice blocks your way when you're coming back to shore, wait for the low tide—because the ice may open up as the tide flows out**.

If conditions allow you to see when the ice opens, go north to the Kokechik River. The Kokechik usually opens because of high pressure at low tide. Another place to go is Nengqirneq, which is located west of the Aprun River. As long as you get to the solid ice edge, you will be fine. Being on the solid ice edge means being out of danger. But avoid getting in the moving ice during tides, because it can be very dangerous. The moving ice can crush the *qayaqs* or boats used for seal hunting.

7. **If you are offshore without a compass and heavy fog occurs, look for an iceberg.**

Observe the iceberg by going around it. The sunny side will be light and the other side will be in shadow. The deep water is usually clear —you can look and determine the shadow side. After finding the sun's direction, move to the direction of the shore. If you have a radio, move it around until you get the best reception from the Nome area stations (*KNOM* or *KICY*), which are to the north. Once you determine the direction of Nome, west will be on your left as you face toward Nome.

8. **When there is a lot of ice, do not go into the main channel of the river (*kuineq*) or into the mouth of a river—because of the strong currents, which may be dangerous to boats.**

When there is an abundance of ice, do not go to the main channel of a river, especially during high tide. The strongest current occurs in the main channels.

9. **The keys to survival in any dangerous situation are stability and clear thinking**.

This is probably the most important rule. If you panic, it can kill you. Panic causes hunters to make wrong decisions. Such decisions have caused many deaths in the past. Older hunters will usually make wise decisions and young hunters should follow those decisions. If young, less experienced hunters go against the decisions of the Elders, it will often cause accidents or even deaths. Many stories of our forefathers are about such situations.

Uqiquq: Sharing of the Harvest

After the hunt, families concentrated on drying the meat of the seal. The blubber was stored in sealskin bags called *caqun*. The *nayiq*, or ringed seal, and maklak , or bearded seal, were shared among all the families. Even families who did not have fathers had their share. This sharing is called *uqiquq*.

The traditional sharing of the bearded seal was a ritual, involving the family of the hunter who had caught the bearded seal. It was prestigious for a man to catch a bearded seal used for this special event.

Girls of the family had a special role, giving out strips of seal blubber to others in the community. This ritual was passed down from grandmothers to mothers and then to daughters. Some of the mothers who didn't have guidance from grandmothers would ask for help from other families. When the oil was ready, one of the family members would yell to the surrounding tents "*Ugicituaryarnaring*—It is time for the passing of the oil." (Seal oil can be in either solid form—blubber—or liquid.) All the women gathered and had joyful conversations. They would tease the eldest girl giving out the strips of blubber.

Many of the people looked forward to the delicacies from the bearded seal. Even the seal intestines were used in soups and in seal-gut raincoats. Many of our traditions and beliefs about the sea are explained in the *Cup'ik Life in the Sea*, that I (John Pingayak) wrote, based on information from my grandfather, Joseph Friday. The Cup'ik values about the seal can be found in the "The Boy Who Went With the Seal Bladders."

Summer Fish Camps

For hundreds of years, Cup'ik families have moved to fish camps when the herring, white fish, and salmon runs arrived in the bays and rivers of southwest Alaska, after wintering to the south. The presence of smaller sea life, such as shrimp, that the larger fish eat is made known by the diving motions of the arctic terns and the black-hooded gulls. Fishing methods and materials have changed in recent times, but fish remain an important part of the Cup'ik diet.

Traditional Fishing

Traditionally, our people made dip nets and seining nets of sinew, to catch larger fish like salmon. Sinews from the backs of large mammals—like the beluga whale—were cut and dried and then spun into thin, long strings. Men and women used homemade mending tools to create nets from these strings. The seining nets were about twenty to thirty feet.

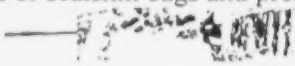
They also made hooks to catch smaller fish like tomcods, bullfish, and flounders. Women and children gathered on the banks of the river with these hooks, which were baited with fish guts or bird parts. Hooking and jigging for these smaller fish is called *manaq*.

The people concentrated on catching fish, although they also caught an occasional seal near these fish camps. Conversations were joyful, with children shrieking with excitement as they pulled up their fish. When they had caught plenty of fish, the women braided them with blade grass (*tupernaq*) and hung them to dry, to be eaten later. (This traditional practice is still used today, and the braided fish of all species drying in the sun make a picturesque sight.)

Contemporary Fishing

Herring Fishing

Herring run before salmon, in late April or early May. Most herring are caught near bays and mouths of rivers. Herring lay their eggs in June, before they reach the rivers, in the kelp and seaweed along the rocky banks of bays. Kokechik Bay is one such bay. There are generally three or four herring runs, with the first run high in fat. Our people prefer the second herring run, because the fish have less body fat and are easier to dry in the sun when they are caught.

Fresh herring have soft meat, and they are not cut immediately when they are caught. Instead, they are cached in fifty-pound sacks and buried to age for a few days. They are easier to cut after being buried for a while near the permafrost of the tundra. The aged herring are then slit open, and their entrails are removed before they are spread out on a wooden surface. After they dry in the sun a little, the heads of the fish are braided together into a string and then hung on racks to dry in the wind and the sun. The braided fish are turned occasionally, so all portions of the meat dry. It takes about four to six weeks to completely dry the fish. The dried fish are packed and stored in buckets or sealskin bags and preserved with seal oil for our winter diet. We also eat the fish along with seal oil.  Click on image to enlarge

Preparation for Salmon Fishing

The salmon runs follow the herring runs, beginning in June. Many different species of salmon return to spawn in the rivers and bays of our region. Our people spend most of the summer in fish camps—catching, drying, and smoking fish. After July, fishing slows down and the salmon are less favorable to catch. As the salmon spawn later in the summer, their flesh becomes soft and colorless.

To prepare for the salmon runs, Cup'ik families gather wooden poles and driftwood from the beach or riverbanks close to the Bering Sea. These are for building fish drying racks and for poles for smokehouses.

The racks for drying fish are constructed of medium-size logs and long, thin poles. It can take a few days to find the right wood for the construction of the fish racks. The four corners are built with strong logs that are staked to the ground. Then the medium-size logs are suspended parallel to each other on the top of the corner logs. The thinner poles are strung vertically along the two parallel logs. Finally, four additional poles are nailed to the main poles, to reinforce the racks so they can withstand strong winds. A plastic canopy protects the fish from rain.

Today we build smokehouses mostly of plywood. Long ago, the people used small four-by-four foot framed structures for smokehouses. They built the bottom of the smokehouse of sod, and the upper part of canvas. The dried salmon were hung on the top of the smokehouse in bundles.

Catching and Processing Fish

Tevyarmiut, Qamanermiut, Cev'allrarmiut, Ukalikcirmiut, Quyungssirmiut, Amilquyugarmiut, and Nunangnerrarmiut are traditional sites of fishing camps. Fish are also caught in various other locations, but they are usually brought to these traditional fish sites for cutting and drying. The salmon are caught with set nets or subsistence commercial nets about one hundred feet long.

Members of the community respect the set net places, and set their nets only when the fish are abundant. The eddies where nets are placed have slow currents, which allow the fish to rest and feed. The nets are checked on every tide change, when the current slackens and the waters become still. Fish taken from the nets are brought to the camps, where the women and girls gut, slit, and fillet them. Then they cut the meat to the skin, starting from the fin, with cuts one to two inches apart. These cuts allow the salmon to dry faster in the sun and the wind.

Once the fish are dried enough, they are smoked until the skin is lightly golden. The types of wood used for smoking fish are cottonwood, alder, willow, and small wooden stemmed plants from the highland areas. This assortment of wood used for smoking fish is not easily accessible; it must be gathered from many

different regions of the tundra.

For the smoking process, a small fire is lit in the middle of the smokehouse, and a heavier log is placed on top of the fire to smolder and create large amounts of smoke. The fire is closely watched so the smoldering log doesn't burst into flames. Then the smokehouse is closed up, so the thick, heavy smoke penetrates the hanging fish. It is important to keep the smoke cool—so the fish is smoked but not cooked. If the smokehouse gets too hot, the fish will cook—which ruins the fish.

It takes a few years to become expert in smoking fish; it takes time to learn these skills our ancestors have been practicing for thousands of years. When the fish are done smoking, they are placed in containers with seal oil. The seal oil is added to preserve the fish, which we call pokefish or *arumaarrluk*. The *arumaarrluk* are stored for eating during the winter.

When the salmon supply is abundant, families also preserve fish by storing and aging them underground; this, too, will be eaten during winter. This type of food preservation is called *cin'aq*. The salmon are eaten in December through March. The aged fish have a strong smell and helps our bodies stay warm in cold weather. Small amounts are taken out of the underground cache at a time.

Sharing the Catch

When fish strike in some rivers, people can catch as many as 80 to 100 fish in a day. When families catch more than they need, they share the catch with other families that are unable to fish. This sharing of food has always been a part of our value system. We believe that if we do not share with others, the food that is given us by our Creator will no longer be available. The more we give away, the more will come back.

Whenever our children catch their first animal, we offer the catch to an Elder, to create positive energy for a good prosperous life for the children. Our Elders have sustained us with the animals they have provided, and in return, the younger generation provides for Elders. My grandfather assured me that the most powerful thing in this world is the power of the mind: the thankfulness of an Elder is good positive energy that makes our spirit pursue nourishment for our families. That is why we are told that to be successful, we must honor and respect our Elders through service to them.

Berry Camps

After fishing season is over, families move to berry camps. The berry season is in the latter part of July and first two weeks of August. Here families do new activities that are refreshing after the long fishing season. Berry camping is called *atsiyaq*. These berry camps can last five to seven days out in the tundra.

Each family has its own special places to gather salmon berries (also known as bog berries). A big family can cover large areas and pick about 30 gallons of berries in one day, or 60 to 80 gallons of berries during the time they are at camp. The berries are stored in plastic bags and kept frozen.

In the old days, families stored their berries in braided bags kept in underground dugouts near the frozen permafrost. In winter, families gathered their berry containers, which were used for *akutaq* (ice cream). The Elders say these stored berries were just as fresh as when they were picked the summer before. Berries are highly nutritious and were historically the only fruit diet of the Cup'ik people.

Unguyaq: Gathering of Birds

Until the 1960s, Cup'ik hunters also harvested geese with a technique called *unguyaq*—the driving of birds. The hunters traveled to an area where emperor geese nested and raised their young. There are just a few areas where these geese concentrate. Essentially, the hunters would surround a big area where they knew the molting adults and their young were concentrated. Keeping their distance from the birds, they would carefully move in and herd the geese (which can't fly when they're molting) onto a lake, where they would kill the birds.

The men and boys camped overnight, away from the selected place to *unguyaq*. Leaders consisted of three or four Elders. Before the gathering took place, the Elders instructed young boys not to stand up on the land and made sure that everyone stayed in their boats, so the geese did not detect their presence. The leaders would discuss the best approach to the selected area.

After the Elders decided where *unguyaq* would take place, they chose a smart, tireless runner. They gave him directions on where to go, what to do when he got to a certain river, and when to start moving to the designated site. The first man stripped himself of his *qaspeq*, or outer cover of parka, then set out running in a certain direction, followed by a second man taking the same route. Then the rest of the runners followed, taking the same route. Each man was carefully briefed before leaving.

At a certain point, another set of men and boys were transported by boat and dropped off at even intervals, to wait for the lead runner. When the first runner saw the waiting hunters, a leader would signal with his hands for everyone to form a large circle and start walking toward the center, as instructed earlier by the Elders.

All the men walked toward a prescribed destination, herding— or rounding-up—the birds onto a lake. As the circle of men became smaller, birds by the hundreds were herded onto the lake. Elders closely watched to make sure birds did not run outside the circle. If there were any gaps in the circle, Elders gave instructions for closing the gaps. When the birds were on the lake, the hunters killed them and the boys gathered the dead birds. The birds were sorted into piles, with adult birds on one pile and the young birds on the other. Then they were distributed to the men who had participated and all the families.

The Elders recall that they used to catch birds by the boatloads during these gatherings. They also said that sometimes the number of birds being herded to the center might appear large but become small after they had been gathered and distributed. The Elders would then say, "The *ircinrraqs* have taken some of them." The *ircinrraqs* are legendary little people of the underground, who roam the tundra and are not seen often. Many villages in our region have stories of *ircinrraqs*, portraying them as supernatural people of the tundra. (See Lesson IV for discussions of supernatural beings.)

Today the *unguyaq* is no longer practiced, because of the decrease in populations of different species of birds. The waterfowl are now managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which has a cooperative management plan with the Waterfowl Conservation Committee of the Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP).

From Camp to Village

The families subsisted and remained at their favorite places until September or October, when they moved back to their permanent villages for the winter. Then, as described in Lesson II, there would be several important festivals before the winter solstice on December 21. And the cycle of the seasons continued.

Glossary

Click on highlighted words to hear the pronounciation

may have to turn up volume

aatunaq- (*Rumex arcticus*) sourdock. An edible plant found along the margins of lakes used in salmon-egg soup and in a kind of akutaq (Eskimo ice cream).

akutaq- *lit. 'something mixed.'* (popularly defined as 'Eskimo ice cream') a category of foods made by mixing together one or more oil-rich ingredients (e.g., Crisco, seal-oil, caribou back-fat, fish livers, bird fat), berries or greens (e.g., cloudberries [commonly called salmonberries], cranberries, crowberries [commonly called blackberries], blueberries, sourdock, raisins, commercial berries, canned fruit), and other optional ingredients including sugar, cooked mashed fish, mashed potatoes, milk, eggs, water, and snow. To first-time samplers, akutaq often seems like a fruit salad of wild berries. Traditional akutaqs are very nutritious because they contain a fat soluble vitamin-rich (vitamins A and D) ingredient such as seal-oil or fish livers with a water soluble vitamin-rich (vitamins C and E) ingredient such as salmon berries or sourdock.

amellrutaq- an ancient form of democratic government where there was open discussion and the majority will rule that may determine the settlement. The amellrutaq was practiced in the Qaygiq where the talking circle was created at the perimeter of the building. The discussion was conducted in the circle going clockwise until everyone had a chance to speak their concerns. After all the alternatives have been discussed the vote was conducted and the majority ruled.

Amigtulirmiut- A village that was wiped out completely by the epidemic. Located around Black River.

Amilquyugaq- a fishcamp site located along the Aprun River.

Aprun- Aphrewn River. Main salmon-fishing river with several campsites and old village sites. Aprun is situated south of the Kashunak River, which then connects with each other.

Aqngirqelluki- Woman giving a gift to a man and asking for something in return. This is during the festival petugtaryaraq.(Giving hardship and pain, whether it be in physical or mental condition.)

Aqumlluk- Putting a person or thing in its appropriate place.

Arumarrluk- Poked fish(dried fish preserved in seal oil).

Arumeng- A sore of the body(refered to the small pox epidemic)

aqevyik- (*Rubus chamaemorus*) cloudberry, commonly called salmonberry. Picked in the fall, and is one of the major subsistence activities of the Cup'ik people. This berry is the main ingredient in most akutaqs.

Askinuk Mountains- (Cup'ik pronunciation, *Askinaq*) mountains located fourteen miles north of Chevak. The village of Scammon Bay, or *Marayaarmiut*, is situated on the north side of the Askinuk Mountains.

Atsiyaq- To go berry camp. To gather berries.

Avayaq nanguq- The announcement of the ceramony that will be held tomorrow night.

Ayaakutat (Ayagyugat)- Young boys

ayuq- (*Ledum palustre*) labrador tea. A low-lying evergreen shrub whose leaves are commonly steeped together with black tea, and also has medicinal and ritual uses.

caiggluk- (*Artemisia)* the wormwood plant. This vitamin C-rich plant is used for medicinal purposes, taken either internally or externally. For internal use, the leaves are boiled in water, stored in jars, and refridgerated. The broth is sipped mouthsful at a time, few times a day, for colds, fevers, body-aches, or any internal-bodily ailments. Externally, they may be used for switches during hot steam-baths, esp. on sore muscle areas; or rubbed onto minor wounds.

can'giiq- (*Dallia pectoralis*) blackfish.

cangerlagpak- an epidemic of either smallpox or influenza.

caqlak- *(Sedum rosea)* the rosewort or roseroot plant. The fleshy tuberous root of this plant is peeled and chewed. They are used as a remedy for sore throats, cold sores, and sores on the body.

caqun- sealskin bag used as a container for poking dried salmon fish in seal oil. The fish are stuffed into the bag until full, then the seal oil is added. These bags were also used as a *qerruinaq*, or harpoon float.

Cev'allraq- *lit. 'one that has cut through.'* Old Chevak. Old village site for the Qissunaq people before excavating to present Chevak.(**Cev'allrarmuit**-People of old chevak)This is now a campsite for several families, and is also a hub for the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Wildlife Refuge (YKDWR) biologists and interns.

Cev'aq- the Cup'ik name for Chevak, derived from the word 'cut-through channel.'

cevellret- two bodies of water connected to each other to form a passageway; made by way of natural land erosion or by the work of humans.

cev'lleq- *(pl. cevellret)* man-made channel used as a shortcut.

Cillam Cua- Man of the universe, Creator.

Cin'aq- salmon fish, usualy chum or king, aged through the process of burying them into the maraq (usually during the fishing season). The hole is dug until the permafrost is exposed. The bottom of the hole is then covered with dry grass, moss, and/cardboard. Then several salmon are placed in. The top of the salmon is again coverd with grass, moss and or cardboard, then the remaining dug up groung is placed back into the hole, tightly covering the contents. The aged salmon fish are usually dug out during the early winter, and eaten as a delicacy.

Cingigmiut- A village that was wiped out by the epidemic. Located around black river.

citegtaq- (*Microgadus proximus*); saffron cod, arctic cod; commonly called tomcod.

Civuliaqatuk- giant in the origin story of the Qissunaq landscape.

cukilek- (*Pungitius pungitius*) stickle-back fish, commonly called needle-fish. These small fish usually are from 1-inch to 2-inches in length. They have spiny backs.

cukvak- (*Esox lucius*) northern pike fish.

Cup'ik- *lit. 'real person.'* The language and people of the Chevak area. More generally, any Yup'ik person.

curaq- (*Vaccinium uliginosum*) blueberry.

cuuyaraq- way of life as a human being, including interactions with others, subsistence knowledge, environmental knowledge and understanding, and spiritual balance. (In Yup'ik, ***yuuyaraq***)

Egkuq- Furthest wall.

Ekevkaq- Melting frost by making fire in the middle of sod house.

Englullugmiut- Settlement in Kiuqlivik that was known to die because of thirst or lack of water. The time this happened was during ancient times.

Eviutet- Grass used as insulation placed over the frames of the sod house.

Evuneq- Large ice that is formed in the shallow parts of the sea.

Friday, Joseph- *deceased.* A respected elder, well-known for his storytelling, composing and choreographing of dances and songs, and knowledge of traditional culture.

iitaq- *(Eriophorum angustifolium)* tall cottongrass, especially the edible lower part of the stem gathered by voles and collected by people from the vole's winter caches.

Ikaraliitat- Wooden seat boards for the Qayaq.

Ikiituggsuq- Gathering of wild celery.

ikiituq- (*Angelica lucida*) wild celery.

Ilgariq-Bladder Festival, which took place in november or in early december. Honoring of the seal spirits and returning them to the sea.

iluraq- cross-cousin.

Ingricukvak- volcano mountains located east-southeast of Chevak.

Ingrillrat- *pl.; singular: Ingrillraq. Lit., 'old or shabby mountains.'* one of the two Cup'ik names for the Kusilvak Mountain. The other Cup'ik name is Manialnguq.

Ingrissaareq- low mountain situated seven miles east of Chevak.

Ircinrraq- Supernatural being that resemble the irish leprechan.

Itertaaq- A Festival that took place in september, this festival lasted five days. It means, to go into the houses of the people.

Kangiraq- Corner

kapuukaraq- (*Ranunculus pallasii*) Pallas Buttercup. An edible green whose shoots are raked from the bottoms of lakes in the early spring, and are simmered in water with seal blubber or added to water fowl soups.

Kashunak- how map-makers spelled *Qissunaq.*

Kashunamiut- English version of Qissunamiut(people of Qissunaq).

Kassiglurmiut- A village that was wiped out by the epidemic. Located around the kusilvak mountains.

Kataneq- Slushy mud used to cover the holes of cracks and openings in the sod house.

kavlakuareq- (*Empetrum nigrum*) crowberry, commonly called blackberry. Picked in large quantities in the fall and used in akutaq.

kayurrlugaq- *(Cottus cognatus)* sculpin, bullhead. Locally known as devil fish, because of the sharp horns on its head.

kelugkaq- coarse grass used for weaving mats. These grasses are found along lakes and small sloughs, usually where there is moss and high tundra alongside the water bodies.

Kenirvik- Fire place in the sod house.

Kepneq- Above the ground door used during spring through late fall. Closed off during winter.

Kiitaat- Tough part of the sod. This part of the sod kept the rain out.

Kiuqliivik- main river draining out to Hooper Bay. This river has several situated salmon-fishing campsites and also gives access to the Kashunak River through two man-made channels, one towards the Kashunak River and the other towards Old Chevak (Cev'allraq).

Kokechik- English version of saying and spelling qugciq. Located about twelve miles northwest of chevak.

Kuineq- Main channel of a river.

Kusilvak- mountain located about thirty miles northeast of Chevak. Its Cup'ik counterpart names are *Manialnguq* and *Ingrillrat.*

Kuskokwim River- second longest river in Alaska. The Kuskokwim drains into the Bering Sea south of Chevak, on the southside of the Yukon-Kuskokwim (Y-K) delta.

Legciq- Hooked walking stick with an ice pick at the end.

maklak (or, **maklagaq**)- (*Erignathus barbatus*) bearded seal.

manaq- a lure with a hook, typically a fishing set consisting of a lure with a hook, line, and a short stick.

Manialnguq- *lit. 'rugged one.'* One of two Cup'ik names for the Kusilvak Mountain. The other Cup'ik name is Ingrillrat.

manignaq- (*lota lota*) loche fish or burbot.

Manuaqinraq- River south of Aprun river.

marallaq- *(Hedysarum alpinum)* an edible grassroot gathered by voles and collected by people from the vole's winter caches.

maraq- low-lying land subject to coastal flooding characterized by salt-water lakes, salt-tolerant grasses and abundant water fowl. The landscape varies from hard-packed ground to soft, marshy swamps and lakes.

Maruaq- 1. howling of a dog or wolf. 2. a ritual of singing a song during the festival of itertaaq.

Nakirneq- side walls

naptaq- white fish

Nasqulek- *lit. 'one with a head.'* Mountain located twenty miles east of Chevak.

naternaq- *(Platichthys stellatus, Atheresthes stomias)* flounder, also known as flat fish.

Nayamin, Ulric- *deceased.* A respected elder and Cup'ik philosopher, Joe Friday's helper and partner, well-known for his leadership and hunting skills.

nayiq- (*Phoca hispida*) ringed seal.

Nekevyuut- teenage boys.

Nelson Island Mountains- mountains on Nelson Island, south of Chevak. The communities of Tununak, Toksook Bay, and Nightmute are situated on Nelson Island.

Nengqerrneq- Land mass between Aprun and Qissunaq river. Identified by highland land form.

Nukalpiaq- fortunate, skilled hunters.

Nunangnerraq- late-summer campsite area where people go to pick salmonberries, located along the Qissunaq River.

nunapik- *lit. 'real land.'* higher tundra free from coastal flooding, characterized by freshwater lakes, abundant berries, and lichens.

Pakigtaat- vegetated sod, five to six inches thick.

pairtesqevkenaku- a warning to not go against it.

Pategluku- patting of the window to remove frost.

Petugtaryaraq- festival that was held during the month of december. traditional exchanging of gifts

Puget- black fish coming up for air.

Pugyaraq- an underground entryway to and from the sod house, used during winter.

puyurniq- (*Rubus arcticus*) nagoonberries, commonly called raspberries.

qagan- (pl: *qagatet*) small, deep outlet stream connecting a lake with a river or slough. A favorite and highly effective place to set conical split-wood or wire blackfish traps.

Qagatet- large lakes where various species of fish spawn.

qagerluteng- '...they exploded' (used in a sentence).

Qaluyaat- *lit. 'dipnets.'* Nelson Island, mountains on Nelson Island, south of Chevak.

Qamaneq- *lit. 'place lacking winds or water currents.'* Salmon-fishing campsite on the Kiuqliivik River.

Qaspeq- outer lining of a parka.

qayaq- kayak.

qaygiq- a large sod-covered community house where men and boys slept, took fire baths, and worked on projects. It was also a place where ceremonies and dances were performed.

Qerratarutet- The wooden frame on the sod house.

qerruinaq- seal skin bag used as a harpoon float.

Qissunamiut- people of Qissunaq. Our people moved first to Old Chevak and then to the present village of Chevak.

Qissunaq- the main river area where the people of Chevak originated from, including campsites along the Qissunaq River and inside the tributary streams and sloughs.

Qugciq- place located about twelve miles northwest of chevak. used for spring seal

hunting and commercial fishing.

quunarliaraq- (*Oxycoccus microcarpus*) bog cranberry.

Quyungssiq- salmon-fishing campsite on the Aphrewn (Aprun) River.

Scammon Bay Mountains- the Askinuk Mountains. (See *Askinuk*)

Scammon Bay- village located north of Chevak, and is situated on the north side of the Askinuk mountains.

taperrnaq- (*Elymus mollis*) beach rye grass. Other names used are saltwater rye grass or coarse seashore grass. This strong grass is used for weaving grassbaskets and loosely woven carrying bags.

Tapraq- skin, rope or string used to tie various things like carving, masks ect.

tayaruq- *(Hippurus* species*)* mare's-tail plant.

teggneq (pl. teggneret or teggenret)- a respected elder.

Tengmairun- First of the seasonal festivals held during the end of the summer season. A lot of preparation was done before this celebration. This was a form of potlatch.

Tevyarmiut- salmon-fishing campsite on the first-outer bend of the Kiuqliivik River.

tumagliq- (*Vaccinium vitis*) lowbush cranberry. Used in akutaq.

Tuqtuq- first combustible engines.

Tutemkaq- burrow step for the underground passage way in the sod house.

Ualirneq- the wall located at the entrance of the sod house.

Uqnaq- Sourdough soup flavored with fish liver and blood. Eaten only once a year during salmon fishing season.

Ukalikciq- river where salmon-fishing and salmon berry-camps are situated. This river is one of the tributaries of the Kashunak River, and is accessible to the Ingrissaareq Mountain.

Unguyaq- Gathering of flightless molting geese.

Uniqullek- One of the qaygiq in Nunaruluq. This Uniqullek was an ancient building to the

south of Qaygicuaraq.

Uqicitaaryarnariuq- "it is time to go get seal blubber." This expression is for the blubber of bearded seal only.

Uqiquq- Passing out of bearded seal oil- The stripped long blubber for girls in the family and square cut blubber for men in the household.

Urasqaq- painting on the faces on the fifth day of itertaaq to commemorate the time the youngsters encountered a supernatural being.

> **utngungssaaq**- *(Hippurus vulgaris)* the edible tuber of the mare's-tail plant gathered by mice and collected by people from the mouse's winter caches.

Yukon River- longest and largest river system in Alaska. The Yukon drains into the Bering Sea through a number of channels, mostly north of Chevak. Over tens of thousands of years, it has created a large delta (the Y-K delta). The majority of Yup'ik communities are situated in this delta or along its sea coast.

Yup'ik- *lit. 'real person.'* Language of the Central Alaskan Yup'ik area from Seward Peninsula to the Alaska Peninsula; more generally, a person from that region.